TOWARD POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL CLARITY AND CARE:
FIRST YEAR ESL TEACHERS AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY

Courtney George

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Education.

Chapel Hill
2008

Approved by:
Kerry Villalva
George Noblit
Dwight Rogers
Dorothy Holland
Kim Pyne
ABSTRACT

COURTNEY GEORGE: Toward Political and Ideological Clarity and Care: First Year ESL Teachers and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy  
(Under the direction of Kerry Enright Villalva and George Noblit)

This study uses narrative inquiry and reflexive ethnographic methods to complicate and add to the body of first year teacher literature by exploring the intersections of language and culture in today’s schools and through the narratives of first year English as a second language (ESL) teachers. This research also provides new knowledge regarding the development of ESL teachers—a topic given little attention by the research community. In addition, it provides information about a unique induction context worth attention due to new migration patterns and the rapidly growing population of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Finally, this work adds to the body of multicultural education literature by highlighting the voices of English language learners and their teachers. Using the theoretical orientation of political and ideological clarity and care, this study investigates the critical first year of four ESL teachers to describe key personal, contextual, and structural factors that influenced their professional beliefs and practices. In addition, the study explores the conversations of first year ESL teachers during new teacher support group meetings and their understandings of the unique position they inhabit in schools as teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Finally, one teacher’s journey toward culturally responsive teaching and Funds of Knowledge is examined in depth.
To my husband, Andrew George, who knew I could do this before I did
(even with a toddler and another baby on the way).
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I look at this dissertation, I see clearly the many people who helped me along the way. The four teachers who participated in this research not only taught their elementary and middle school students, but they educated me as well. I learned so much and was continually surprised by their willingness to talk, share, and reflect on their work and on mine.

My mentor and advisor, Kerry Enright Villalva, got me through my graduate work and dissertation with the perfect balance of encouragement, honesty, and chocolate. While at UNC Chapel Hill, she always managed to find funding and teaching opportunities to help me grow and develop as a scholar and teacher. Even after moving to the University of California at Davis, she continued to support my work and writing through detailed feedback and long phone calls. She is an amazing teacher and she generously shared her experience and knowledge. I am so grateful for her guidance, support, and advocacy.

I would also like to thank the other members of my dissertation committee whose commitment to both research and teaching is outstanding and inspiring. George Noblit was the mentor and advisor who saw me through all of my years at Carolina. He was always able to find time in his busy schedule to meet with me to help me work through my methodological and theoretical dilemmas and questions. His patience, humor, and knowledge got me through both my MA and PhD.

Dwight Rogers also offered amazing support during my years at Carolina. His commitment to teacher education helped me see that it is possible to merge teaching and research interests. He not only made sure I had funding and teaching opportunities, but he also always made sure I was doing OK. I’ll never forget being stranded with a screaming baby during a School of Education event and Dwight was the first one to come and see if he could help. For every new mother, I thank you!

Dotty Holland helped me gain confidence as a qualitative researcher and writer. Her ethnographic methods course pushed me and allowed me to see the world in a new way. Her feedback and ideas were always challenging, interesting, and kind. Her perspective, seemingly insatiable curiosity, and scholarship are exceptional.

Kim Pyne is a Culture, Curriculum, and Change graduate. I met her early in my master’s program and was always impressed by her writing, thoughtfulness, and commitment to teacher education. She was always hard at work, but always made time to offer a kind word of encouragement. I considered her to be a sort of graduate student mentor and she continues to share her experience as a new professor with me. Her feedback on my dissertation was extremely helpful and encouraging.

This dissertation was also accomplished with the support of the Graduate School’s dissertation completion fellowship which I was honored to receive. This award gave me the opportunity to spend a year focused on writing.

On a personal note, I would like to thank my Mom (Ann Hodge), Dad (Joel Hodge), Sisters (Tracy Straub and Kiernan Hodge), Niece (Kendra Straub), and Nephew (Brady
Straub). Though they are all 3,000 miles away, I could always feel their love and support. I don’t think any of us could have predicted this path of mine, but I always knew that no matter what happened, I could count on my family back in Oregon.

My mother-in-law (Reisa George) and father-in-law (Paul George) were another source of amazing family support. Their ability to come and care for their grandbaby so I could write allowed me to meet deadlines and maintain my sanity during this process. In addition, they read and edited much of this work and supported me during the defense. I don’t know how I would have made it without them.

I would also like to thank my very good friend, Janet Lopez who made me think and laugh everyday. Even after her own graduation, she kept reading and editing my work all the way from Colorado. I owe a great deal to her scholarship and friendship. Liz Naess is another friend who provided that special support of understanding (having recently defended her dissertation). She always made time to listen and knew just when to offer to baby sit or format the final draft.

Finally, as my advisor said, “You and Andrew have been very productive in Chapel Hill.” We have earned two Master’s degrees, had a baby, got pregnant with a second baby (still baking as I write this), produced one PhD, and should complete another by the end of next year. I’m still not sure how we have managed all of this, but I know I couldn’t have done this with anyone other than Andrew. He and I have grown and learned so much in the six years we’ve been on this journey—about ourselves, our passions, our work, and our devotion to each other. Thank you, Andrew, for pushing me towards graduate school in the first place and for being my greatest support.

And one final thank you to Miss Charlie Ann Hope George, my wonderful, hilarious, and spirited girl (and to your little brother or sister in the belly). It would have been easier, quicker, and less exhausting without you in my life, but I am grateful everyday for the balance you force me to strike. I believe my work is important and I strive to do my best, but you are the center of my universe. Thank you for choosing me.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables .........................................................................................................................x

List of Figures .........................................................................................................................xi

Chapter One: Cultural and Linguistic Diversity, Beliefs, Context, and Teachers .................. 1

  Chapter Descriptions ............................................................................................................ 4

Chapter Two: Language and Culture, Theory and Practice – Toward Political and Ideological Clarity and Care ........................................................................................................ 8

  Key Constructs: Culture and Language ................................................................................ 10

    Cultural and Linguistic Diversity .................................................................................. 10

    Approaches to bilingualism and second language acquisition ....................................... 11

  Pedagogical Approaches to Diversity and Equity ............................................................... 13

    Multicultural Education ................................................................................................. 13

    Critical Multicultural Education .................................................................................. 15

  Critical Praxis in Second Language Classrooms ............................................................... 18

    Critical multicultural education and second language acquisition ............................... 18

    Culturally responsive teaching .................................................................................... 19

    Intersections, Contributions, and the Need for Teachers’ Voices ............................... 21

    Conceptualizing Political and Ideological Clarity and Care ........................................ 22

Chapter Three: Caring and Reciprocity in Research Relationships—A Narrative and Reflexive Methodology .......................................................... 27

  Narrative Inquiry .............................................................................................................. 28

  Reflexive Ethnography ...................................................................................................... 30
The unique perspective and marginalized spaces of ESL .......................................................... 74

Relationships with other teachers ......................................................................................... 76

Collaboration .......................................................................................................................... 78

Unique Perspective, Place, and Position—Concluding Thoughts .................................. 82

Chapter Five: You Need More than Political and Ideological Clarity and Care—A Story of Culturally Responsive Teaching and Hope Between the Structures of Schooling .......... 84

Introduction ............................................................................................................................. 84

You Need More Than Political and Ideological Clarity and Care ........................................ 84

Initial lessons from the field .................................................................................................. 85

Reproduction theory and cultural production ..................................................................... 87

The set-up ................................................................................................................................ 88

Segmented assimilation and reception .................................................................................. 90

Hope ....................................................................................................................................... 94

Pushed ..................................................................................................................................... 94

Gaining momentum ............................................................................................................... 96

Regrouping and reconnecting .............................................................................................. 98

The moment ............................................................................................................................ 102

Finding spaces for making change ...................................................................................... 104

Chapter Six: Social Movements, Authentic Relationships, and Crossing Borders .......... 106

Beyond Classroom Practices—Social Movements and Authentic Classroom Relationships .......................................................... 107

Taking culturally responsive teaching to the next level ..................................................... 107

Finding spaces for relations .................................................................................................. 109

Complications ........................................................................................................................ 111
Beyond the Classroom Walls—Toward Funds of Knowledge ........................................ 114

Defining funds of knowledge ..................................................................................... 114

Finding a place to cross ......................................................................................... 116

Member Checking and Continuing the Dialogue ..................................................... 119

Chapter Seven: Connections and Contributions .................................................. 123

Theory and Practice ................................................................................................. 125

Methodological Commitments and Contributions ................................................. 127

Filling Gaps and Making Connections .................................................................. 129

Implications for Teachers of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Youth ............ 131

Teacher education for ESL teachers ...................................................................... 131

Teacher education for all teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse youth .... 134

Support for new teachers into the first year and beyond ...................................... 135

APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL AND CONSENT FORMS ........................................ 136

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH LOG .............................................................................. 150

APPENDIX C: NEW TEACHER SUPPORT GROUP MEETING PROTOCOL .......... 153

APPENDIX D: WRITTEN REFLECTION FORM ....................................................... 154

APPENDIX E: TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS ................................................... 155

APPENDIX F: FORMAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL .................................................. 156

APPENDIX G: TEACHER EDUCATION SCHEDULE OF COURSEWORK .......... 157

REFERENCES ............................................................................................................. 159
LIST OF TABLES

TABLE I: Research Participants and Sites.................................................................41
TABLE II: Research Questions and Sources of Data..................................................44
TABLE III: Research Phases and Progress...............................................................45
LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: Conceptual Framework ..............................................................26
Chapter One:
Cultural and Linguistic Diversity, Beliefs, Context, and Teachers

Throughout the country classrooms are becoming more culturally and linguistically diverse while teachers remain overwhelmingly White, middle-class, monolingual speakers of English (Bartolomé & Trueba, 2002; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Howard, 1999). This is of particular importance in a state such as North Carolina, where the number of students officially designated as limited English proficient grew by over 600% between 1992 and 2002 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Demographics are shifting across the country as new migration patterns fundamentally change our schools nationwide (Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Suárez-Orozco & Páez, 2002). It is clear that we must work to diversify our teaching force to better represent students from diverse backgrounds (Howard, 1999; Suranna, 2003), but we must also better prepare White teachers to work with all students—and increasingly, language minority students.

At the same time, we are experiencing nationwide teacher shortages and rising teacher attrition rates where many teachers leave the profession after only a year or two of service (Herbert & Worthy, 2001). While there is a great deal of literature from a variety of theoretical perspectives focused on the experiences of first year teachers (Bullough, 1989; 1990; 1991; Deal & Chatman, 1989; Grossman, 1990; Herbert & Worthy, 2001; Hollingsworth, 1992; Harris, 1995; Rogers & Babinski, 2002), the critical issues of language and culture in schooling are generally not explicitly addressed. A recent report of the American Educational Research Association on research and teacher education states,
“Research on the preparation of teachers to teach underserved populations should pay special attention to the preparations of teachers to teach English-language learners because almost no research has been conducted on this aspect of diversity in teacher education” (Zeichner, 2005, p. 747). This study will address this widely acknowledged gap in the literature (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Wainer, 2004, Zeichner, 2005). When we consider the shifting demographics occurring in our nation’s schools, both the research and teacher education agendas need to work to better understand and prepare teachers for this “new mainstream” (Villalva, 2008).

This study complicates and adds to this body of first year teacher literature by exploring the intersections of language and culture in today’s schools and through the narratives of first year English as a second language (ESL) teachers. This study provides new knowledge regarding the development of ESL teachers as well—a topic given very little attention by the research community. In addition, there is a dearth of literature examining the development of these teachers in states where ESL is a relatively unestablished field. This study provides information about a unique induction context worth attention due to new migration patterns (Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Finally, the study adds to the body of multicultural education literature by including the voices of English language learners and their teachers.

Using the theoretical orientation of political and ideological clarity and care¹, this study investigates the critical first year of four ESL teachers to describe key personal,

---

¹ A conceptual framework that combines and complicates caring theory (Noddings, 1984) with political and ideological clarity (Bartolomé & Trueba, 2001). This theoretical lens will be further defined and discussed in Chapter one.
contextual, and structural\(^2\) factors that influenced their professional beliefs and practices. In addition, this study explores the conversations of first year ESL teachers during new teacher support group meetings and their understandings of the unique position they inhabit in schools as teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Finally, one teacher’s journey toward culturally responsive teaching is examined in depth. The guiding questions of the research were:

- How do personal characteristics, as well as institutional structures of the teaching context and broader societal structures, influence the classroom practices (specifically culturally responsive pedagogy) and beliefs of new ESL teachers?
- What patterns emerge in the conversations of first year ESL teachers participating in a new teacher support group, and how can these patterns inform the preparation of future teachers?

While the education of linguistically and culturally diverse youth is the responsibility of all teachers, ESL teachers are especially significant since they are often the first point of contact for language minority students in American schools. While ESL teachers are equipped with knowledge of second language acquisition theory and ESL methods, they are often unprepared to manage the unique demands of their job, such as advocating for equitable treatment of ESL students in the mainstream classroom, or acting as a liaison between the families of their students and the school community (Ovando et al, 2006).

In addition, learning ESL has the potential to become a highly subtractive endeavor if teachers encourage the acquisition of English and American culture at the expense of students’ first languages and cultures (Valenzuela, 1999; Valdés, 1996). First year teachers are often simply trying to survive their initial year of teaching with little time to reflect upon their multiple roles. However, there is also great potential in this first year, when teachers

\(^2\) “Structures” refers to the larger societal structures (social, economic, racist) as well as institutional structures (for example, bureaucratic functions within schools including enrollment policies, scheduling, assignment of teachers, disciplinary actions).
are constructing their initial identities as educators (Danielwicz, 2001). This first year is
under-explored for ESL teachers, who are of particular importance as self-selected teachers
of culturally and linguistically diverse youth. ESL teachers often face the decision to affirm
their students’ native languages and cultures or to deliver a subtractive model of ESL
(Valenzuela, 1999). While this study centers on the experiences of first year ESL teachers
and their students, the lessons learned also, in important ways, apply to mainstream teachers
who are working with culturally and linguistically diverse youth broadly defined.

Chapter Descriptions

The intention of this chapter is to provide a general introduction to the purposes of
this study and the questions that guided the research. In addition, brief descriptions of the
chapters are provided to orient the reader to the dissertation’s structure. The next chapter,
*Language and Culture, Theory and Practice—Toward Political and Ideological Clarity and Care*,
reviews and makes connections across the literatures, defines key concepts, and
establishes the study’s conceptual framework—political and ideological clarity and care. It
explores the challenge and accomplishment of the study—bringing a number of orientations
and perspectives together to provide a complex and dynamic lens to best understand the
issues of language and culture in schools. In addition, the chapter moves beyond literatures
and theories to address practice and pedagogy and how they interact with and change
understandings of theory.

Chapter III, *Caring and Reciprocity in Research Relationships—A Narrative and Reflexive Methodology*,
provides detailed descriptions of the study’s methodology from the
general approach and philosophy of methods to the specific tools of data collection and
analysis. The chapter first defines narrative inquiry as conceptualized by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and reflexive ethnography as conceptualized by Davies (1999) to describe the role of narrative inquiry and reflexive ethnography as the methodology for this research study. The chapter then moves to a discussion of researcher positionality, research sites and participants, sources of data, analysis, and limitations. The chapter concludes with a description of the major themes that emerged during this research project that are addressed in detail in subsequent analysis chapters.

Chapters IV, V, and VI hold the study’s major findings. Chapter IV, *Marginalized Experts—The Unique Position of First Year ESL Teachers*, reviews the body of first year teacher literature and uses the experiences of the four ESL teachers in this study to highlight the significant gap in this literature with regards to culturally and linguistically diverse youth. In addition, an analysis of the conversations during the new teacher support group meetings highlights important teacher-generated themes (marginalization, school relationships, the unique position of ESL, and collaboration\(^3\)).

Chapter V, *You Need More than Political and Ideological Clarity and Care—A Story of Culturally Responsive Teaching and Hope Between the Structures of Schooling*, emphasizes the importance of political and ideological clarity and care to address the gap in previous first year teacher literature to include issues of language and culture. At the same time, the chapter points out the role institutional structures play in schools and society and how these structures effect the resources for and barriers to the enactment of culturally responsive pedagogy in one first year ESL teacher’s classroom. Reproduction theory

\(^3\) Collaboration refers to a teaching structure where mainstream classroom or content teachers collaborate or co-teach with a specialist teacher (such as a special education teacher or ESL teacher). The theory behind this practice is that students will not miss content instruction with pull-out services and the two teachers can inform each other’s pedagogy and professional knowledge.
(Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Apple, 1979; Giroux, 1983; Bourdieu, 1977) and cultural production theory (Levinson & Holland, 1996) are used to emphasize the hope found in the spaces between institutional structures of schooling and the agency of teachers and students.

Chapter VI, *Social Movements, Authentic Relationships, and Crossing Borders*, highlights how the world outside of the classroom finds its way into schools and how one first year ESL teacher used this opportunity to bring her culturally responsive teaching to the next level. In addition, this chapter describes how this teacher managed to not only provide culturally responsive pedagogy, but used timely world and local events to foster a classroom culture of exchange and respect between students from very different backgrounds. These complex interactions between the larger political and social realm and schools, generate interesting questions about the role of teachers beyond the four walls of their classroom and calls for the practice of Funds of Knowledge\(^4\) (Moll et al., 1992; Gonzalez et al., 2002, 2005). The chapter concludes with a conversation that took place through member checking during the writing process.

Finally, the last chapter’s focus on the connections between classrooms and broader social movements and communities leads to a discussion of final thoughts, conclusions and implications held in Chapter VII, *Connections and Contributions*. This chapter shares the general conclusions of the study as well as an exploration of the theoretical and methodological contributions and implications. In addition, the chapter’s discussion on the

---

\(^4\) Moll et al (1992) define funds of knowledge as “the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (p. 133). These scholars argue that when teachers shed their role of teacher and expert and instead take on a new role as learner, they can come to know their students and the families of their students in new and distinct ways. With this new knowledge, they can begin to see that the households of their students contain rich cultural and cognitive resources and that these resources can and should be used in their classroom in order to provide culturally responsive and meaningful lessons that tap students’ prior knowledge (Moll et al., 1992; Gonzalez et al., 2002, 2005).
literature points out the study’s contributions to the multicultural education literature, the literatures on second language acquisition and ESL, and the first year teacher literature. The chapter highlights the study’s ability to simultaneously address issues of language, culture, beliefs, educational relationships, reproduction theory, multicultural theory, and practice into a coherent argument. Implications for ESL and general teacher education are also addressed with special attention given to the need for all teachers to be prepared to work with culturally and linguistically diverse youth.
Chapter Two:
Language and Culture, Theory and Practice – Toward Political and
Ideological Clarity and Care

As the last chapter points out, one of the general goals of this research was to highlight and study the under-explored first year teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse youth. Achieving this goal could have been accomplished from a variety of perspectives using a number of literatures relating to language and culture. The challenge and accomplishment of this study has been to bring a number of orientations and perspectives together to provide a complex and dynamic lens to best understand the issues raised and addressed. A second purpose of this study has been to move beyond literatures and theories to address practice and pedagogy and how they interact with and change understandings of theory. Therefore, this dissertation draws connections across language, culture, theory, and practice. It accomplishes this through the lens of political and ideological clarity and care and through the voices of teachers. This chapter will review and make connections across the literatures, define key concepts, and establish the study’s conceptual framework.

culturally responsive caring theory (Noddings, 1984; Gay, 2000; Thompson, 1998; Valenzuela, 1999) frame the research as well. In addition, this study draws upon the literatures of first year teachers (Bullough, 1989; 1990; Bullough et al, 1991; Deal & Chatman, 1989; Grossman, 1990; Herbert &Worthy, 2001; Mayes & Maile, 2004; Veenman, 1984), as well as new teacher support groups (Harris, 1995; Hollingsworth, 1992; Rogers & Babinski, 2002).5

Included are literatures that attempt to describe and theorize cultural and linguistic diversity in schools at a conceptual level. Also reviewed here are literatures that consider elements of pedagogies that promote social justice for culturally and linguistically diverse students in practice. I have found that these literatures are interconnected and it is at these intersections where I situate the conceptual framework for my dissertation—political and ideological clarity and care. In order to articulate the theoretical orientations of my work, I will first explore cultural and linguistic diversity by defining culture and then examining approaches to bilingualism and second language acquisition. Next, multicultural education and critical multicultural education will be reviewed and defined. Finally, I will discuss one pedagogical approach that values and builds on cultural and linguistic diversity in classrooms—culturally responsive teaching. These discussions of the literature and key concepts will provide the foundation necessary to understand the conceptual framework that will be presented in the last section of this chapter.

---

5While this literature will be reviewed in chapter 3, it is important to note that the first year teacher literature has generally failed to include an analysis of culturally and linguistically diverse students.
Key Constructs: Culture and Language

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity. The concept of culture as a social construction has a long and tenuous history. In 1865, Tylor defined culture as the complex whole of all habits and capabilities learned in a society such as knowledge, laws, art, beliefs, morals, and customs (Foster, 2003; Matsumoto & Juang, 2004). While this definition is a useful starting point, it is important to note that it emphasizes culture at the group level and negates diversity within the group. In 1990, Soudign, Hutchemaekers, and Van de Vijver came together and analyzed over 120 definitions of culture with the hope of finding commonalities. While their work revealed five semantic dimensions that categorized the various historical definitions, they argued that specific definitions should be selected in order to emphasize or highlight certain aspects or uses of the concept of culture (Matsumoto & Juang, 2004).

It is from this perspective that I have chosen to use Etta Hollins’ conceptualization of culture (1996) to frame this discussion of the literature. Grounded in anthropology and education, Hollins’ conceptualization includes three distinct definitions of culture. However, for this dissertation, I will be drawing from Hollins’ Type III definition of culture. Hollins draws on the work of Saravia-Shore and Arvizu (1992) to define the Type III Culture. These authors write that the function of culture guides “people in their thinking, feeling, and acting… [and serving]… as a roadmap in an evolving journey of survival or as a river bed that creates its own form and direction over time due to a variety of influences” (p. xxvii). This definition of culture encompasses both individual and group factors, which makes it more useful when considering dynamic diversity within and across groups.

Hollins argues that such a metaphor conveys the centralized, complex, and changing role culture plays in the lives of all people. She also believes that this definition of culture
contains more room for agency and self-determination. Hollins also states that such a
definition of culture challenges traditional theories of learning, embraces culturally mediated
instruction, and utilizes collaborative, noncompetitive learning strategies. According to this
Type III definition of culture, curriculum content contains and builds upon knowledge about
culture (history, beliefs, customs, traditions, and accomplishments of particular groups) and
cultural knowledge (understandings, values, and behaviors acquired in the enculturation
process at home). This definition of culture is used as a lens to better understand teaching
and learning in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts.

Approaches to bilingualism and second language acquisition. Hollins’
conceptualization of culture provides an interesting starting point to enter into a discussion of
bilingualism and second language acquisition. Scholars have written about the
interconnected nature of culture and language, as well as identity, ideology, and critical
pedagogy. Sleeter and Bernal (2004) write, “Identity, values, experiences, interpretations,
and ideologies are encoded linguistically; one knows the world and oneself through
language. Because consciousness is shaped through language, language can serve as a means
of control as well as a means of liberation…. In short, critical pedagogy can enrich analysis
of language within multicultural education” (p. 244). As Sleeter and Bernal (2004) assert,
these issues resonate with ESL and bilingual educators who are aware of the political and
ideological nature of working with culturally and linguistically diverse students and families.
However, second language acquisition (SLA) theory often fails to take these issues of power,
identity, culture, and ideology into account.

Recent SLA scholars (Hawkins, 2004; Norton Pierce, 1995; Baker, 2000; Cummins,
1993; Auerbach, 1995; Corson, 1993) have begun to challenge and complicate this body of
literature by examining language and language acquisition by adding into the equation analysis of issues such as identity, culture, context, politics, ideology, and power. Norton Peirce (1995) argues that SLA researchers need a more comprehensive theory that will allow research to take into account the relationship between the learner and the social world as well as relations of power. In viewing social identities as multiple, changing, co-constructed, and contested, Norton Pierce creates a new and rich way to think about language learning and the context in which learning takes place.

Hawkins (2004) also writes about the shortcomings of traditional SLA research. She argues that the research has carried with it assumptions that have had a significant effect on how we think about language and language learning today. This narrowly focused SLA research has generally come out of the fields of formal linguistics and cognitive psychology (Krashen, 1994; early Cummins, 1980; Chomsky, 1998; Hakuta, 1986) and has focused on the mental processes of individual learning. Traditional SLA research worked to describe the features of language, the order of acquisition, and cognitive psychological processes such as motivation, cognitive styles, critical period theories, and learner styles.

Hawkins (2004) suggests approaching issues of language learning from a variety of perspectives and disciplines. She sees a role for anthropology, social and cognitive psychology, critical theory, linguistics, semiotics, communications, sociology, and other fields to reconceptualize “classrooms as spaces in which language and literacy skills develop through situated social practices” (p. 14). This sociocultural approach to SLA research posits “a view of language, learning, and teaching that sees meanings and understandings constructed not in individual heads, but as between humans engaged in specific situated social interactions” (p. 15). In order to get at the complex processes of second language
learning, Hawkins (2004) views classrooms as ecological systems with interdependent and multiple components that students must learn to navigate both socially and academically.

**Pedagogical Approaches to Diversity and Equity**

Multicultural Education. These explorations of culture and language illustrate the complex nature of these concepts, which helps explain why multiculturalism is equally complex, contested, and hard to define. Multicultural education grew out of the sociopolitical context of the 1960’s social protest movement “as a scholarly and activist movement to transform schools and their contexts” (Sleeter & Bernal, 2004, p. 240). However, much of multicultural education as redefined and enacted today fails to address power and racism explicitly or critically. Banks (2004) argues that there is a great deal of consensus about multicultural education’s goals and theoretical framings, but acknowledges that there is a gap, as other scholars have noted (Gay, 2004), between the theory and practice in classrooms. In an attempt to define multicultural education, I will first describe three foundational conceptualizations of the field. I will then move to discuss some of the criticisms of various manifestations of multicultural education. Next, I will use the work of Sleeter & Bernal (2004) to examine the ways critical race theory, antiracist education, and critical pedagogy inform a definition of critical multicultural education that has important implications for ESL classrooms. Finally, I will explore the connections between critical multicultural education and second language acquisition theory.

James Banks (2004) argues that multicultural education’s goal is to reform schools so that they provide diverse students (racial, ethnic, class, gender, language, etc.) with educational equity. His work conceptualizes multicultural education through five
dimensions: content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social structure. These five dimensions illustrate Banks’ comprehensive and multifaceted conceptualization of the world and vision of multicultural education. In addition, Banks describes multicultural education’s levels of curriculum reform: Level 1—The Contributions Approach (heroes and holidays); Level 2—The Additive Approach (content and perspectives added to traditional curriculum); Level 3—The Transformation Approach (changes the structure of the curriculum to view concepts from diverse perspectives); Level 4—The Social Action Approach (students think about and make decisions about social issues as well as take action to try to solve them). Banks argues that for multicultural education to be transformative the social action approach to curriculum reform must be strived for and all five dimensions need to be part of a comprehensive program.

Sonia Nieto (2004) conceptualizes multicultural education as a basic education for all students attained through comprehensive reform that rejects all forms of discrimination in schools and in the society at large. Multicultural education is integral to the curriculum and teaching strategies as well as relationships between teachers, students, and families. Critical pedagogy’s focus on knowledge, reflection, and action forms the philosophical and theoretical foundation and pushes educators to strive for social justice, democracy, and equity. She argues that multicultural education is antiracist education, basic education, important for all students, and pervasive. It is education for social justice, it is a process, and it is critical pedagogy.

Christine Sleeter (1996) looks at the complexity within the field of multicultural education by delineating five different approaches within the United States:
• **Teaching the Culturally Different**—attempts to raise student achievement through culturally compatible education, but does not address structural barriers to such achievement.

• **Human Relations**—provides sensitivity training for teachers, but does not address institutional racism.

• **Single Group Studies** (Black Studies, Chicano Studies, Women’s Studies)—teaches the group’s history and current struggles with oppression explicitly.

• **Multicultural Education Approach**—attempts to redesign schools to make them pluralistic and equitable.

• **Education that is Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist**—makes political and economic oppression and discrimination explicit and teaches students skills to take action toward social justice.

In addition to these conceptualizations of multicultural education, scholars such as Nieto (1995), Sleeter (1996), McLaren (1994) and Kubota (2004) have looked at what they generally call conservative and liberal forms of multicultural education as well as criticisms. Conservative multiculturalism adheres to a facade of diversity without a commitment to social justice and without giving up power or privilege (McLaren, 1994). Liberal multiculturalism “promotes tolerance, acceptance, and respect towards different cultures and culturally diverse people” (Kubota, 2004, p. 78). However, liberal multicultural education’s belief in pluralism is manifested in a “heroes and holidays approach” and believes in a power-blind acceptance of meritocracy (Kubota, 2004; Nieto, 1995).

for second language teaching and learning. Her understanding of critical multicultural education takes into account the politics of cultural and linguistic difference. In addition, she argues against both liberal and conservative enactments of multiculturalism. These theorists are working against the conservative and liberal enactments of multicultural education and their arguments are important because, as McLaren states, “multiculturalism without a transformative political agenda can be just another form of accommodation to the larger social order” (1994, p. 53).

Sleeter and Bernal (2004) discuss the important interconnectedness of race, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, and all forms of difference. They and other multicultural education scholars view these differences as multiple and connected forms of oppression that must be addressed (Ladson-Billings, 2004; Kubota, 2004; Banks, 2004; Gay, 2004). Sleeter and Bernal (2004) also write about the complexities involved in moving toward critical multicultural education and the ways Critical Race Theory (CRT), antiracist education, and critical pedagogy can help inform and expand multicultural education in theory and in practice.

Ladson-Billings (2004) and Sleeter & Bernal (2004) define Critical Race Theory and discuss criticisms as well as implications for multicultural education. CRT, primarily developed by scholars of color in legal studies, holds three premises: First, CRT understands that “racism is normal, not aberrant, in American society” (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 58). Second, CRT uses storytelling to challenge injustice and racism in society. Third, CRT adheres to a concept of interest convergence, the notion that “a society’s elites allow or encourage advances by a subordinated group only when such advances also promote the self-interest of the elites” (p. 58). Sleeter and Bernal (2004) outline three important implications
CRT has for multicultural education: (1) It theorizes about race as well as the intersectionality of multiple forms of oppression; (2) It “challenges Eurocentric epistemologies and dominant ideologies such as meritocracy, objectivity, and neutrality” (p. 245); and (3) It uses counterstorytelling to inform method and pedagogy.

Sleeter and Bernal (2004) also discuss antiracist education defined as “an action-oriented strategy for institutional, systemic change addressing racism and the interlocking systems of social oppression” (p. 249). While many manifestations of multicultural education shy away from discussions of racism, antiracist education makes these discussions central and explicit. The implications for multicultural education are that antiracist education problematizes Whiteness, directs attention to challenging racism and racist structures in schools, situates culture within structures and relations of power, and connects schools with communities (Sleeter & Bernal, 2004).

Sleeter and Bernal (2004) trace critical pedagogy to the Frankfurt School and the work of Paulo Freire. The work that came out of the Frankfurt School theorized the reproduction of oppressive political and economic structures, but failed to see personal agency and resistance to such structures. On the other hand, Freire believed that “oppressed people need to develop a critical consciousness that will enable them to denounce dehumanizing social structures and announce social transformation” (p. 242). Sleeter and Bernal (2004) argue that critical pedagogy provides multicultural education with tools for critical reflexivity, an analysis of class and power, an analysis of empowering pedagogy for the classroom, and a deeper analysis of language and literacy. The limitations, however, are that it is difficult to translate into classroom practice and it fails to address race, ethnicity, or gender.
For the purpose of this paper, I will use the work of Sleeter and McLaren (1995) to define critical multicultural education. They write that critical multicultural education links multicultural theory and critical pedagogy in a way that “seeks to construct counter hegemonic pedagogies, oppositional identity formations, and social policies that refuse, resist, and transform existing structures of domination primarily in school sites but also in other cultural sites within North American geopolitical arena” (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995, pp. 28). This definition of critical multicultural education takes into account the criticisms of liberal and conservative multiculturalism and the work scholars such as Nieto, Ladson-Billings, Kubota, Banks, and McLaren that connect multicultural theory and critical pedagogy. Other authors such as Cummins (1993) and Kubota (2004) have brought a similar conceptualization of critical multicultural education to the context of second language classrooms.

Critical Praxis in Second Language Classrooms

Critical multicultural education and second language acquisition. Drawing more directly from critical pedagogy and critical multicultural education, the work of Cummins (1993) and Kubota (2004) make even more explicit the connections between SLA, power, ideology, and multicultural education. Kubota (2004) argues that critical multicultural education has an important place in second language classrooms, but she problematizes the assumption that second language learning and second language teachers are inherently multiculturalist. She argues, “Second language education should critically examine the token status of liberal multiculturalism and redefine multiculturalism in light of power, domination, and oppression” (p. 82). In recognizing both the inadequacy of liberal multicultural
education and the potential subtractive nature of ESL classrooms, Kubota (2004) illustrates the important need for SLA research and the education of language minority students to be grounded in critical multicultural education.

Cummins (1986, 1993, 1994, 1995) also writes about power and identity in relation to educating language minority students. He argues that when working from a critical pedagogy orientation, educators and students can learn to reflect critically on social issues and come to understand the inseparable nature of language and meaning. Weaving SLA theory and critical pedagogy together, he recommends that schools value the educational and personal experiences students bring with them to school, understand the process of language acquisition in order to provide effective language and content instruction, respect and continue to support students’ first languages, and seek a collaborative relationship with parents and community leaders. He writes, “Considerable research data suggest that for dominated minorities, the extent to which students’ language and culture are incorporated into the school program constitutes a significant predictor of academic success” (1986, p. 107). Cummins’ findings present a strong argument for a critical multicultural education that takes language, culture, identity, and power into account.

* Culturally responsive teaching. Critical multicultural education has important implications for first year teacher studies, SLA theory, research, and practice, but even on the theoretical level these ideas are complicated and contested. Finding ways to incorporate language and culture as well as the political and ideological aspects of teaching and learning into the classroom is extremely challenging. However, culturally responsive teaching is one powerful and concrete example of critical multicultural education’s potential for practice and pedagogy.
Culturally responsive teaching was originally developed by scholars as a way to meet the needs of African American students who were being forced to adhere to a White, middle-class school culture. Theorists such as Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995) and Gay (2000) were working against the deficit model of schools and were attempting to find ways to make classrooms relevant, meaningful, and at the same time, rigorous academically for African-American students. Gay (2000) defines culturally responsive teaching as “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. It teaches to and through the strengths of these students” (p. 29). Along with other multicultural education scholars, Gay argues that culturally responsive teaching must be validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipatory.

Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995) has also theorized about culturally responsive pedagogy. She is concerned with successful teaching that focuses on students’ academic achievements and represents intellectual growth and ability to produce change while at the same time supporting students’ connection to and understanding of their own culture. Instead of being detached from their home culture, culturally responsive pedagogy seeks to teach students to be bicultural. For Ladson-Billings and Gay, culturally responsive pedagogy’s priority is for students to be academically successful without being forced overtly or covertly to give up their language or culture. In addition, the political and ideological nature of this theory pushes teachers and students “to ask larger questions about school and society to work to expose inequity and social justice” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p.111).
Intersections, Contributions, and the Need for Teachers’ Voices. What becomes apparent in reviewing all of these literatures is that each provides a unique perspective on the workings of culture and language in society and/or in schools. Unfortunately, there is very little communication occurring across these fields with regard to actual practice in today’s diverse classrooms. There are places where these literatures intersect—Kubota (2004) and Cummins (1995) have brought critical multicultural education theory into the ESL context, Hawkins (2004) and Norton Pierce (1995) have taken interdisciplinary approaches to reconceptualize SLA theory as a situated, social practice, Sleeter & Bernal (2004) and Corson (1993; 1994) have brought ideology, power, culture, and language together through their work—but considering changing demographics and the growing numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse youth in today’s schools, the need to communicate across disciplinary boundaries becomes more pressing.

This study, through careful consideration of all of these influences, worked to bring language, culture, theory, and practice into sharp focus. Critical multicultural education theory has given researchers and teachers an ideological and political orientation to today’s linguistically, economically, culturally, and racially diverse schools. It acknowledges the larger institutional and societal structures and their impact on teachers and students. Recent SLA theory has begun to include discussions of power, ideology, and context along with their linguistic analysis. Culturally responsive teaching, has both encouraged historical and political perspective, as well as acknowledged the underlying, feminist ethic of care. These literatures have all provided powerful lenses through which to view and interpret today’s classrooms. However, none of these literatures give adequate voice to teachers themselves. Just as language and culture are intricately connected, so are theory and practice—and
teachers are the only ones who can really tell us about theory in practice. Until researchers and teacher educators understand classrooms from the perspective of teachers working within significant institutional constraints, critical multicultural education, second language acquisition theory, and culturally responsive pedagogy will fail to provide a comprehensive foundation for real change in schools.

Drawing from all of these literatures, and carrying these perspectives into the classroom and into a new teacher support group, allowed this research to position language and culture within today’s teaching context from the lived experiences of ESL teachers. Classrooms are complex and changing and therefore, our theoretical approach to educational research must reflect this diversity and respect those who work within these institutions on a daily basis. The theoretical framework for this research study attempts to consider the expertise developing in a variety of fields to find a conceptual perspective that can address the challenges in all of their complexity and through the stories of teachers working with culturally, economically, and linguistically diverse students. This framework takes into account the ideological and political nature of teaching and learning, and attempts to address these issues of politics and power through a politically situated, culturally responsive, and caring theory.

*Conceptualizing Political and Ideological Clarity and Care*

Both critical multicultural education and recent conceptualizations of SLA theory emphasize a need for political and ideological clarity, the first part of my theoretical framework. As Chapter 3 will articulate, the first year teacher literature has generally failed to include an analysis of culturally and linguistically diverse students and SLA research has
generally failed to address issues of culture, power, and ideology. However, these literatures are still important foundations for this study. A priority of this work has been to address this gap in education research by making issues of political and ideological clarity central and explicit. Political and ideological clarity requires that teachers acknowledge their own political and cultural assumptions by explicitly and systematically addressing issues of difference (Valenzuela, 1999; Bartolomé & Trueba, 2001; Expósito & Favela, 2003; Howard, 1999; Rolón-Dow, 2005; Thompson, 1998). This can help teachers avoid deficit ideologies and perspectives that often result in “subtractive” teaching practices that are the norm in many of our schools today (Valenzuela, 1999).

The second part of my theoretical framework involves political and ideological care. This part of the framework is grounded in caring theory as conceptualized by Nel Noddings (1984, 1992; 1998). Her theory of care is built upon “natural” notions of feminine nurturing and care to establish an ethic of care to be used in education. Her theory challenges the traditional “masculine” approach to educational structures that rely on hierarchy, separation, specialty, objectification, and the loss of relation in educational institutions focused on testing, sorting, labeling, and credentialing. In the era of No Child Left Behind, this caring perspective is of particular importance.

Scholars such as Valenzuela (1999), Thompson (1998), Rolón-Dow (2005), and Gay (2000) have extended Noddings’ caring theory to explicitly address issues of race, class, and power. These authors argue that if a teacher truly and authentically cares for her students, then she must work against the subtractive curriculum out of a genuine respect for a student’s cultural integrity (Thompson, 1998). Gay (2000) writes that caring theory is one of the pillars of culturally responsive pedagogy and therefore, if a teacher is caring, then she must
be culturally responsive. Thompson (1998), Valenzuela (1999), and Rolón-Dow (2005) argue that for teachers to care for their culturally and linguistically diverse students, they cannot pretend to be color-blind. Instead, they must attempt to learn, understand, and know their students’ historical, political, and personal situations. They must reject the assimilationist and deficit ideologies that oppress students and find ways to teach students and teachers to work for social justice and societal change. This kind of caring theory is authentic, politically situated, and culturally responsive.

Political and ideological clarity and care bring all of these literatures and theories together to form a comprehensive and complex lens through which to conduct and analyze educational research. In bringing these ideas together, I have created a theoretical orientation that both heightens the importance of language, culture, and power in today’s schools, and grounds the work in a feminist, ideological, and caring perspective that respects the experience and perspective of teachers. This framework has implications for teacher education as well. Many teachers come to the profession claiming to care about students, but without political and ideological clarity, this caring is merely an aesthetic form of care that prioritizes the subject over the student (Valenzuela, 1999). However, from this place of caring, some teachers can be encouraged to question their knowledge, dispositions, and personal histories in order to gain the kind of clarity required to provide an authentic form of caring in the classroom. Caring can be the impetus that pushes new teachers to work toward greater understandings of their students, teaching contexts, and selves.

The ways in which they choose to enact a caring theory reflects their level of political and ideological clarity through their everyday classroom practice. However, the support required for teachers to engage in such reflective practice is generally insufficient. First year
ESL teachers are faced with a demanding set of tasks beyond teaching grammar and academic English (Cummins, 1986, 1995; Kubota; 2004) such as serving as cultural brokers, community liaisons, and educators of mainstream teachers—complex responsibilities that would benefit from political and ideological clarity and care. Armed with a coherent ideological and caring approach, ESL teachers can engage more effectively in culturally responsive and caring pedagogy to better meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Gay, 2000; Kubota, 2004; Sleeter, 1995, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2004).

Complicating this theory further, the findings of this study illustrate through one particular teacher’s story, the significant role that school and societal structures play in the lives of teachers and their students. While this conceptual framework places significant importance on the individual beliefs of teachers, it is situated historically and politically, thus allowing larger, structural issues to be included in the orientation to and analysis of classrooms. This ideological, caring, and politically situated view of schools listens to the voices of teachers and attempts to understand their beliefs and actions in relationship to the complex and changing environment in which they live and work (Coble, 2006; Gitlin, 1990; Hawkins, 2004).
This figure attempts to illustrate the relationships between caring theory; political and ideological clarity; politically situated, culturally responsive caring theory; and political and ideological clarity and care. Caring theory through the lens of political and ideological clarity becomes politically situated, culturally responsive caring theory. Political and ideological clarity and politically situated, culturally responsive caring theory, together become political and ideological clarity and care—the conceptual framework of this study.
Chapter Three:  
Caring and Reciprocity in Research Relationships—A Narrative and Reflexive Methodology

This project was a year-long qualitative research study focusing on the experiences of four first year ESL teachers in a suburban North Carolina school system where the language minority student population is growing rapidly. While most of the data were collected between July 2005 to June of 2006, a pilot study the previous year (while the teachers were participating in their teacher training program) and follow-up during the fall of their second year of teaching also informed and provided context for the research. An important priority of the research was to use the conceptual framework, political and ideological clarity and care, along with narrative theory and reflexive ethnography to build ethical, caring, and reciprocal research relationships in the field. In addition, the methods of this study were informed by the desire to highlight language and culture as well as the narratives and voices of teachers. Approval for conducting this research was granted by the school system, the system’s ESL coordinator, the principals of four schools where the teachers were employed, and the IRB (See Appendix A).

In this chapter I will describe the approach and design of the study. I will first define narrative inquiry as conceptualized by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and reflexive ethnography as conceptualized by Davies (1999) to describe the role of narrative inquiry and reflexive ethnography as the methodology for this research study. I will then discuss researcher positionality, research sites and participants, sources of data, analysis, and
limitations. This chapter concludes with a description of the major themes that emerged during this research project that will be addressed in detail in subsequent analysis chapters.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry has many roots. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) write that “Narrative is a way of characterizing the phenomena of human experience and its study which is appropriate to many social science fields” (p. 2). Narrative has been explored and utilized in fields such as literary theory, anthropology, psychology, linguistics, history, philosophy, and education. Carter (1993) writes that educational researchers began using narratives to “capture the richness and indeterminacy of our experiences as teachers and the complexity of our understandings of what teaching is” (p. 5).

Narrative inquiry is grounded in Dewey’s view that experience is central and continuous to learning and Vygotsky’s theory that exchange and learning take place between the personal and the social (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; Rushton, 2004). In addition, narrative inquiry pays close attention to the context in which narratives are lived out. These are the three dimensions of narrative inquiry: (1) the continuity of time (past, present, and future); (2) the interaction between the personal and the social; and (3) the context of place. “As we compose our narrative beginnings, we also work within the three-dimensional space, telling stories of our past that frame our present standpoints, moving back and forth from the personal to the social, and situating it all in place” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000, p. 70).

Narrative inquiry allows the researcher to embrace the complexity of the teaching and learning context and to use the stories of teachers, students, and the researcher to capture, through narratives, the personal and social experiences of education. One of the most
appealing aspects of narrative inquiry is its collaborative and caring approach to research “participants.” While all research is plagued by unequal power relations, the goal of narrative inquiry is to build caring, intimate, and trusting research relationships. This approach allows the researcher to become invested in the lives of the participants in a way that complicates the process, but makes it richer with meaning. This caring approach to research allows a feminist ethic of collaboration and care to take priority (Hollingsworth, 1992; Noddings, 1984, 1991). The relation is always more important than the research itself (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; George, 2004).

In such research relations, the researcher must negotiate the relationships with participants as well as the purposes of the research, the transitions in and out of the field, and ways for the researcher to be useful in the research context (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000). This ongoing negotiation forces the researcher to be reflexive and to see the co-constructed nature of the inquiry. It also pushes the researcher to seek reciprocity in the classroom and to participate in the research context. As educators return to the classroom as researchers, it is important to find and negotiate meaningful ways to contribute to the classroom community. While the purposes of the inquiry will shift and change as the stories in the field are lived, told, and retold, the researcher’s commitment to relationships and reciprocity must remain a priority.

This complexity and the negotiated nature of the process also make it important for the researcher to explore his or her own story as part of the inquiry process. Clandinin and Connelly write, “What became clear to us was that as inquirers we meet ourselves in the past, present, and future… it is not only the participants’ stories that are retold by a narrative inquirer. In our cases, it is also the inquirer’s stories that are open for inquiry and retelling”
(2000, p. 60). They caution that this should not overpower the voices of the participants, but stress the importance of the researcher’s reflexivity of their own subjectivities that are an inevitable and important part of the research narrative (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Davies, 1999). Embracing such an approach requires wakefulness and a feminist ethic of care and collaboration. While narrative inquiry does not provide a specific recipe for doing this work, it does provide an interesting set of ideas that each researcher must make their own. Of primary importance in this study were narrative inquiry’s: 1) ability to work within the complexity of the teaching context (taking into account time, interaction, and place); and 2) prioritization of reciprocity and a feminist ethic of research relationships.

**Reflexive Ethnography**

Narrative inquiry as conceptualized by Clandinin and Connelly is a reflective and an ethical approach to educational research. It does not provide a specific recipe of methodology, but instead orients a researcher to the field in a particular way. They write, “We keep in the foreground of our writing a narrative view of experience, with the participants’ and researchers’ narratives of experience situated and lived out on storied landscapes as our theoretical methodological frame” (2000, p. 128). However, aspects of the work closely resemble reflexive ethnography as conceptualized by Davies (1999) such as the focus on ethical research relationships and the importance of contextualizing research in time and place.

A narrative approach with reflexive ethnography as an important aspect of its methodology is a powerful and compelling lens through which to conduct educational research. Reflexive ethnography is aligned well with narrative inquiry in a number of
important ways. Davies (1999) takes into account the implications of postmodernist and post
colonialist critiques. She argues that reflexivity, a process of self-reference, is a possible way
to address these critiques, while avoiding both self-absorption and solipsism. She writes, “I
consider the implications of various postmodernist critiques for the practice of ethnographic
research and suggest an epistemological perspective from which we can carry on social
research while continuing to benefit from the sensitivity to issues of reflexivity and the
general self-critique of the recent past” (1999, p. 6).

Reflexive ethnography provides an important orientation to the research as well as
methodological tools with which to gather and analyze data. Davies (1999) describes
methods such as participant observation, formal and informal ethnographic interviews, and
biography and autobiography though the lens of wakefulness and reflexivity. This
methodological approach provides the tools necessary to gather the authentic and meaningful
narratives of the classroom. Narrative inquiry will be used to guide and shape this study in
order to capture both the individual and social stories that make up the rich expressions of the
teachers’ beliefs and classroom practices (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Reflexive
ethnography will be used to inform the methods of this study.

Over the course of 16 months, I used these powerful methodological orientations and
approaches as my foundation. Always keeping both my subjectivity as well as my
commitment to ethical research in mind, I utilized participant observation, informal
ethnographic interviews, the collection of oral histories and reflective writings, focus group
discussions, autobiographical explorations, and document analysis to create detailed
fieldnotes and transcriptions. These data held my best, but still incomplete, interpretations
of the complex, changing, and multiple narratives I encountered in the field. As the
participants, their students, schools, and communities changed, so did my methods. If my hands-on support was requested and needed in a classroom, I found ways to jot down fieldnotes when I could and then recorded the account immediately upon leaving the field. When I realized I needed a broader understanding of the teaching context of the four teachers, I scheduled day-long observations in order to gain that perspective of their experiences. I strived for high technical standards of data collection and I also sought to remain true to the art of collaborative and ethical inquiry.

Positionality

As a narrative inquirer, it is important to explore my own narrative thread running through this research project. In past projects, it has been important to explore my own story because my experience was vastly different from the teachers I was attempting to understand through my research. With this project, I discovered that, due to the many similarities I shared with the research participants, I had to even more thoroughly revisit my own storyline in order to better understand my reactions to, and interpretations of their experiences. Like the women participating in this research project, I am a white, middle-class woman. I was an ESL teacher for four years in western North Carolina. I have known the teachers participating in this research study since July of 2004 and I have worked with them throughout their teacher education program as an instructor, teaching assistant, and student-teacher supervisor and mentor. I have had to work to understand the impact this shared history has had on the research encounter.

These four teachers and I have a great deal in common and have shared many experiences over the past few years. There are, however, a number of differences. For
instance, I taught ESL in a very different context than the teachers participating in this study. I worked with a predominantly Latino student population—primarily a large Mexican-immigrant population. An important part of my ESL curriculum was supporting students’ use of their first language in the classroom and communicating directly with the families of my students.

In addition, I did not attend a teacher education program and did not have an opportunity to be a student-teacher. When I moved to Asheville in 1998, I applied for a teaching position at a local public school system and was hired on the spot. I had a few weeks to prepare—to learn how to teach, to learn what to teach, and to begin to think about myself as a teacher. The next thing I knew, I was standing in front of a classroom teaching ESL and Spanish.

I remember visiting the school before my first day of teaching to meet some of my colleagues. As I drove home from this encounter, I began crying because I was completely overwhelmed by, and unprepared for this new job. A significant part of this reaction came from the 23 year-old in me mourning the loss of a life of travel, adventure, and spontaneity. I was going to be a teacher. I remember promising myself that I would not lose my identity, and I promised myself that I would get a tattoo or pierce something to resist looking like or becoming a teacher (though I never actually did).

In hindsight I think that much of my strong reaction grew out of feeling like I had given into my family’s expectation that I would make a good teacher—that teaching was an appropriate career choice for me. I majored in Spanish and my family encouraged me to get my teaching certificate so that I could really use my degree and have something to fall back on. Both of my sisters had become teachers and as the youngest, I believed that I could and
should do something different and special. However, as soon as I met my ESL students and their families, my assumptions about being a teacher began to shift. I began to formulate an ESL teacher identity and in my mind, I was an advocate and a change agent in pursuit of social justice. I became less concerned with resisting a teacher image and more concerned with the lives and education of my students. I began to distinguish between a traditional teacher identity and an ESL teacher identity that was progressive and on the margins of the profession.

As I have written about and discussed my story and process of identity formation, I have found that my story, to a large extent, drives the motivations and agenda of my research. I have come to realize that this is inevitable, and it should be explicitly addressed and analyzed. Owning up to my own subjectivities (Peshkin, 1988) helps me remain reflexive during the research process (data collection, analysis, and writing it up), and it allows the reader to better understand the context and complexity of the research encounter.

I have distinct memories about the kind of ESL teacher I was. To capture these memories, I informally spoke with those who knew me as a first year ESL teacher. I conducted interviews with a few teachers and other colleagues who I worked with my first year. To provide one example of the importance of this kind of reconstructed considering of my own teaching story, I will share a conversation I had recently with my husband (who was my boyfriend during my first year of teaching). I had just been talking with one of the participants and she was telling me that she didn’t know if she was going to make it through the year, let alone through a career of teaching.

Me: Andrew, do you remember me ever talking about quitting teaching my first year? (I remembered being tired, but so completely fulfilled by my work. I was
surprised to hear this teacher’s desperation and desire to quit. I honestly did not remember feeling the desire to quit).

Andrew: Oh yeah, all the time. Don’t you remember talking constantly about quitting teaching and becoming a children’s book author and illustrator?

I was floor—ed—as soon as he answered me, the memories flooded back. I remembered thinking that I would never make it through the year, and it would be wonderful to work from home, writing and drawing all day, drinking tea, and listening to soft music instead of working in a bustling, loud, action packed, stressful classroom. I shared this story with the new teacher, and she expressed how nice it was to hear that my first year had been difficult too. The dynamics of our research relationship began to shift, and she could more easily connect with the new teacher I had once been.

There have been a couple of these moments during the research journey where my own reconstruction of my past was insufficient or unclear. Talking with others who were there with me in those moments has been extremely helpful, not only in filling in the blanks, but also in helping me better understand the experiences of the new teachers with whom I worked on this project. It was easy to sit back and judge them, but was important to realize that I was sitting in judgment as a doctoral student who had not been in the classroom for close to five years. While I kept this in mind (as well as my own struggles as a first year teacher), I recognized that I was a very different kind of teacher than the four women who participated in this study. I was an activist.

I was intimately involved in the community of my students. Part of this closeness with the community came from my desire to know where my students were coming from, but as the only bilingual teacher at my first school, I was also frequently called upon to interpret phone calls as well as conferences or meetings with parents. This took away from my
teaching time, but it made me the voice of the school and put me in direct dialogue with the parents of my students. Because of this service, I was welcomed into the community and appreciated by both the school and parents for helping bridge a significant communication gap. In addition, the school was actively involved in working with community leaders, parents, and services to better meet the needs of the students both inside and outside of the school building. I also worked a second job at the Boys and Girls Club in my school’s community and wrote a grant to integrate the Latino community into the predominantly African American Boys and Girls Club with the encouragement of the Latino families of my students. All of these experiences greatly influenced my understandings of the role of an ESL teacher in a school and community.

I was also working with a very different community of students in rural western North Carolina than the teachers here in this suburban, university town. In addition, the political context was markedly different in North Carolina in the late 1990s. When I began teaching in the state, the Latino population was very new and immigration issues were just beginning to enter the public discourse. After September 11th, both the militarization of the border and the debate surrounding illegal immigration began to take hold across the country. By the time of this study, the demographics had continued to shift throughout the state and nation and the “threat of immigration” was a national priority raised nightly on Fox News. In response, an organized and vocal Latino community was galvanized around immigrant civil rights.

My positionality was explored and interrogated throughout this research study and this kind of reflection has continued through the writing stage. My relationships with the teachers were examined as well as my own teaching story. I know I was not able to discover
all of my biases and subjectivities, but I struggled diligently toward reflexivity and wakefulness in my work and in my research relationships in the field. With this in mind, I have positioned myself as honestly and accurately as possible in the retelling of the stories collected in the field (including my own) in order to provide the reader with the opportunity to make judgments about my work and my position within it. Narrative inquiry and reflexive ethnography provided the approach and tools necessary to pursue this kind of reflective and mindful qualitative research.

Research Sites and Participants

All four ESL teachers were selected because of their participation in a local university’s ESL teacher education program which emphasized social justice and equity in education. The four focal teachers also expressed a desire to continue their education as first year teachers through the support of a new teacher group and participation in this research study. All four teachers were White, middle-class females, and their ages ranged from early 20s to early 40s. Three of the four teachers were bilingual and one was a monolingual speaker of English with limited proficiency in a second language. Each of the four teachers secured employment upon graduation in the same school system, yet each worked in unique contexts, including different grade levels, ESL program models, and student demographics.

Two teachers were full-time middle school ESL teachers. Sarah taught at Saunders Middle School. This school had about 700 students (18% Asian, 10% Latino, 17% Black, 50% White, and 5% multiracial). The majority of the ESL population was comprised of Korean students. She taught a 6th grade beginning ESL class (almost all Korean students with two Latino students) and an 8th grade advanced ESL class (all Latino students), as well

---

6 All names have been replaced by pseudonyms.
as three collaborative classes with language arts teachers. Sarah spoke Spanish and Farsi, but
had never lived abroad. There was another full-time ESL teacher in this school\(^7\). Sarah was extremely thoughtful and reflective both as a student and teacher. She saw teaching as her
calling and she took her work very seriously.

The other middle school teacher was **Kelly**. She worked at **Pine Middle School** with roughly 650 students (14% Asian, 6% Latino, 14% Black, 60% White, and 4% multiracial). The ESL students at Pine were extremely diverse with a majority of Korean students and smaller numbers of Japanese, Latino, Eastern European, and African students. Kelly taught an 8\(^{th}\) grade beginning ESL class, a 7\(^{th}\) grade beginning ESL class, an intermediate ESL class, a sheltered social studies class, and a 7\(^{th}\) grade intermediate high/content support class. Kelly was fluent in French and had lived abroad several times in France and the Caribbean. She was the only full time ESL teacher at the school, but there was another teacher who spent two periods a day at Pine. Kelly knew the local schools well from her experience as a mother of two daughters (elementary and middle school aged) and her work as a teaching assistant. Her life experience (working, living, and raising a family abroad) uniquely positioned her to understand many of her students and their families.

The two other teachers identified in this study taught predominantly at the elementary level. **Rebecca** was an itinerant teacher and taught a 6\(^{th}\) grade beginning ESL class and a collaborative science class at Pine Middle School before heading to **Randolph Elementary School**. Randolph Elementary school had over 500 students (20% Asian, 4% Latino, 15% Black, 55% White, and 5% multiracial). Another full time ESL teacher at this school taught the K-2 pullout classes, and Rebecca worked with the grade 3-5 students. Rebecca spoke Polish and had lived abroad in Europe and the Middle East with her family growing up.

\(^7\) See table with research sites and participants following narrative descriptions.
Rebecca was the most confident and boisterous in the group. She expressed her opinions loudly and without apology. While her ultimate goal was to teach abroad, she enjoyed her multicultural classrooms and brought her personality and energy into her teaching. She was always willing to try something new and wound up coaching Pine Middle School’s track team even though she had no experience coaching.

The other elementary teacher, Lynda, worked at Grandview Elementary School. Grandview had just over 450 students (30% Asian, 6% Latino, 13% Black, 46% White, 5% multiracial). Another full time ESL teacher working at Grandview spoke Spanish and worked with most of the school’s Latino students. Lynda taught small pullout classes (with two to five students) and collaborative classes with a pre-school class and a 4th grade math class. She was the only participant who did not speak a second language and she had never lived abroad. Lynda’s husband was an administrator in the local schools and she shared a great deal of knowledge regarding the workings of the school system with the group. She enjoyed teaching, but was looking forward to becoming a stay at home mother in the near future.

In this school system, there was a significant gap between the academic achievement of Latino and Black students and their White and Asian peers. This gap existed within the ESL classroom as well with the Asian students outperforming their Latino peers. This school system (set in a university community), however, was somewhat unique and did not reflect the rest of the state’s demographic make-up. While the overwhelming majority of language minority students across the state at the time of the study were Spanish-speaking Latino students, the majority of ESL students in this school system were Korean. These students were often only in the school system for one or two years and often had bilingual, well-
educated, middle-class parents. In addition, for the last five years, there had been an extremely high turn-over rate in the ESL coordinator position in this school system, and this had often left the ESL teachers unsupported forcing them to take on more leadership responsibilities as a result. The context of this school system and the particular schools was an important aspect of this research study.
Table I:  Research Participants and Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Language(s)</th>
<th>Background</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Aspiration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Early twenties</td>
<td>Spanish and Farsi</td>
<td>North Carolina native, no travel experience at the time of study</td>
<td>newly engaged</td>
<td>university professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>Early forties</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>not a North Carolina native, well-traveled, lived abroad (France, Caribbean)</td>
<td>married with two middle school aged daughters</td>
<td>ESL teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saunders Middle School</td>
<td>2 full time ESL teachers</td>
<td>700 students (18% Asian, 10% Latino, 17% Black, 50% White)</td>
<td>2 ESL classes (beginning/advanced)</td>
<td>3 collaborative classes in Language Arts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pine Middle School</td>
<td>1 full time ESL teacher and 1 part time</td>
<td>650 students (14% Asian, 6% Latino, 14% Black, 60% White)</td>
<td>Kelly (fulltime): 4 ESL classes (beginning/intermediate)</td>
<td>1 sheltered instruction social studies class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca (part time):</td>
<td>6th grade beginning ESL</td>
<td>Collaborative class in Science</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynda</td>
<td>Early twenties</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>not a North Carolina native, traveled to England, newlywed</td>
<td>career aspiration(s)—teaching and motherhood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randolph Elementary School</td>
<td>1 full time ESL teacher and 1 part time</td>
<td>533 (20% Asian, 4% Latino, 15% Black, 55% White)</td>
<td>Rebecca: 3rd and 5th grade pullout classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandview Elementary School</td>
<td>2 full time ESL teachers</td>
<td>450 (30% Asian, 6% Latino, 13% Black, 46% White)</td>
<td>Lynda: K-2 small group pullout classes</td>
<td>Collaborative classes (pre-school and 5th grade math class)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection

Between July of 2005 and June of 2006 (See Appendix B for Research Log), ten new teacher meetings were held during the research period and these focus groups lasted one to two hours each. Each month a different teacher hosted this meeting in her classroom and I provided pizza and drinks. A few of these meetings were held in local coffee shops or restaurants. The teachers were asked to bring stories, resources, ideas, and challenges to these meetings to share with the group. I asked two or three open-ended questions (See Appendix C) at the beginning of each meeting and asked the teachers to write a written reflection (See Appendix D), and the rest of the time the teachers directed the conversation about their most pressing needs. These conversations were tape-recorded and later transcribed (See Appendix E for transcription conventions). These meetings provided important data through the stories and voices of teachers. The meetings were also one important way the research attempted to reciprocate and contribute to the teachers and their students.

In addition to the monthly meetings, at least one individual formal interview (lasting between one and two hours) was conducted with each teacher. The interview with Sarah was broken into two sessions due to the complexities of her experience and her responses. These interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed. The interview protocol (See Appendix F) consisted of four general topics (oral history/background, decision to teach ESL, current teaching context, and feeling about participating in the research project), and the teachers took these interviews in a variety of directions due to the open-ended nature of the interview questions. This source of data accomplished a number of objectives: 1) it provided important context and depth of understanding regarding the teachers’ backgrounds; 2) it gave the
teachers’ opportunities to share their understandings of their teaching selves and lives; 3) it helped the research better understand the teachers’ beliefs surrounding teaching in general and ESL specifically; 4) it gave the researcher a better understanding of the research project’s impact on their well-being and teaching practice.

During the data collection, over 50 classroom observations and/or informal interviews were also conducted. While one day-long observation with each teacher took place, the majority of observations lasted between one or two class periods (50 minutes to two hours), with an informal interview taking place before or after the classes (10 to 30 minutes). Some of these observations were conducted from the back of the classroom while taking detailed notes, but the majority of observations included my direct participation with the teachers and students as I assisted in the classroom however the teacher requested. For the most part, I circulated throughout the room and helped individual students during these visits. Sometimes, I was asked to work with a group of students on a particular project. In one case, however, I taught the class for two days so Sarah could conduct one-on-one conferences with the students in her office.

When I was directly participating in the classroom, I would take step back from time to time to record notes and tape-record my observations immediately after leaving the field. These recordings would then be transcribed and written into fieldnotes. At least once per month, I spent time in each teacher’s classroom, but if the teachers requested it, I would spend more time in classrooms. This is why I spent more time in Sarah’s classroom throughout the period of research (of the 51 classroom observations and/or informal
interviews, 25 were with Sarah), and she became the focal participant of this research study. These classroom visits and observations were extremely important methodologically. While previous studies have used new teacher support groups to collect data (Harris, 1995; Hollingsworth, 1992; Rogers & Babinski, 2002), these studies have not followed the teachers into their classrooms to both corroborate and inform the researchers’ understandings of teachers’ beliefs and practice. These visits also provided important data and information about the school context and climate, teachers’ perspectives on their practice, and the lives, beliefs, and actions of students.

The bulk of data were collected through the new teacher support group meetings, formal interviews, classroom visits, and informal interviews. Additionally, I ventured out of the classroom in order to understand—as a researcher—the larger school, community, and social context of the study. This included attending a local immigration rally, meeting with one group of Latino parents in their apartment complex to discuss the transition from middle school to high school, spending time in the homes of two teachers, and meeting with them, from time to time, in coffee shops and restaurants.

**TABLE II: Research Questions and Sources of Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Main Sources of Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| How do personal characteristics, as well as institutional structures of the teaching context and broader societal structures, influence the classroom practices (specifically culturally responsive teaching) and beliefs of new ESL teachers? | • Classroom/school visits  
• Informal interviews  
• Formal interview(s)  
• Written reflections |
| What patterns emerge in the conversations of first year ESL teachers participating in a new teacher support group, and how can these patterns inform the preparation of future teachers? | • New teacher meetings  
• Informal interviews  
• Written reflections |

---

8 Due to her context, as well as her dedication to improving her practice, I was invited into deeper involvement and support of Sarah and her students. In addition, her 8th grade ESL class of all Latinos, drew my attention due to my own teaching experience and the knowledge of the demographic shift across the state.
**TABLE III: Research Phases and Progress**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Research Phase</th>
<th>Research Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| July to July 2004-2005   | Preparation and Pilot Study     | Taught courses and was a teaching assistant in the MAT program, conducted pilot study on two focal teachers during student-teaching placements.  
In the summer of 2005, the four focal teachers were asked to participate in the study and provided written consent, as well as the school system, school principals, and the ESL coordinator. |
| July 2005-October 2006   | Data Collection Completed       | o Five formal interviews (oral history/background, decision to teach ESL, current teaching context, and feeling about participating in the research project) conducted and transcribed  
o Ten new teacher support group meetings held and transcribed  
10 new teacher support group meetings held and transcribed  
51 classroom observations and informal interviews conducted and detailed field notes written (including one day-long observation for each teacher)  
6 monthly written reflections collected  
6 monthly written reflections collected  
One meeting with Latino Families in apartment complex  
One meeting with Latino Families in apartment complex  
Local Immigration Rally  
Local Immigration Rally |
| November 2006-August 2007| Transcribing, Data Analysis, and Initial Writing | o Transcriptions were completed and all research data was compiled and organized  
Data was analyzed for initial emerging themes and was coded  
All themes were checked for negative case examples and complexities  
Data was analyzed a third time and important quotes were pulled and arranged by theme |
| September 2007-February 2008 | Member Checking and Writing | o A summary of the themes, analysis, and chapter drafts shared with focal participant for member-checking purposes and feedback  
A first draft of the manuscript completed and turned in to the chair of the committee  
Revisions completed final draft submitted to dissertation committee |
Analysis

General Description of Approach to Analysis. In terms of analysis, narrative inquiry was instrumental in informing my approach because it acknowledges the complex nature of the research encounter. First, in order to do these rich data justice, I paid close attention to the three dimensional inquiry space by collecting past, present, and future narrative threads and used the continuity of time as a way to organize and analyze the data, careful to avoid the ethnographic present (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; Davies, 1999). Second, I took into account the personal and social stories of the participants and the larger community in order to tease out the multiple and interconnected nature of these accounts. Analysis relied on both micro and macro lenses in order to describe the individual and community voices, and present the personal and social experiences that impacted the teaching and learning context (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000). Third, place played an important role not only collecting data, but also in its analysis. I paid close attention to the role context played in the narratives collected. Analysis addressed the individual classroom, the school, the community, as well as the larger political and social climate in which the research took place. Finally, the story of the researcher and the stories not told became (and continue to be) central to the narratives as they were analyzed, told, and retold.

In addition, field reports were written throughout the data collection period to systematically look at the study’s progress and consider future plans for the inquiry (Glesne, 1998). Trustworthiness of this inquiry was established through a prolonged engagement in the field, persistent observation in multiple contexts, constant reflection as a researcher, and member checking (Davies, 1999; Glesne 1998). While informal analysis was an ongoing part of this qualitative inquiry, a more formal and concentrated period of analysis began once
the data collection phase ended (Davies, 1999; Glesne, 1998). Both the informal and formal analysis utilized in this study will be discussed in detail below.

**Ongoing Informal Analysis and Research Questions.** In qualitative research, it is important to acknowledge the role analysis plays throughout the research encounter. This process starts with focusing on research questions. While I had a general sense of my research questions before I began to collect data, these questions shifted and changed in reaction to the field. As the research questions changed, so did the methodology. My initial research interest focused on how personal characteristics and context influenced classroom practice and beliefs (specifically relating to funds of knowledge and culturally responsive teaching). In addition, my fieldnotes included observational notes, theoretical notes, self notes, and methodology notes, and I was able to reflect upon, and adjust both the research questions and methods to better capture and understand the emerging stories in the field. As the study progressed, I became much more interested ways in which the beliefs (political and ideological clarity and care) and practice (culturally responsive teaching) of new ESL teachers were impacted by the institutional and social structures and context of schooling.

The emergence of Sarah as the focal participant was another important result of ongoing and informal analysis. Initially, I spent equal time with each of the four teachers and planned to do a comparative analysis of their contexts (and was considering including two other teachers in different school systems). The combination of Sarah’s interest in research and reflection, her interesting and demanding teaching situation, and her frequent requests for support, all led to a shift in the research design and methodology. She became a central figure in the study and as a result, the other teachers provided a larger context in which to place and better understand Sarah and her students. Throughout my time in the field, I
analyzed and negotiated the terms of involvement and responded to the needs and interests of the teachers and their students. This flexibility allowed me to adjust the study in order to uncover the most compelling and important story and provide the reciprocity and collaboration I value as a researcher— informs both political and ideological clarity and care as well a narrative and reflexive methodology.

*Formal Analysis.* Once the data were collected, the more formal analysis of compiling and organizing the data began. First, I finished all transcriptions and organized the data three ways: 1) chronologically; 2) by teacher; and 3) into an initial set of categories (beliefs, practice, context, challenges) so that relevant data were accessible and any emerging themes or theories could be tested and refined with supporting arguments and interpretations from the data (Davies, 1999). With a large source of data, the process of finishing, reading, re-reading, and organizing transcriptions allowed me to re-familiarize myself with the details and complexities of the study. This process, however, was briefly interrupted by the birth of my daughter, forcing me to both step away and then re-enter the study with a very new perspective.

During this second pass through the data, I began to formally code and new themes began to emerge. I arrived at some of these initial themes deductively as I used the lenses of the literatures and conceptual framework to interpret and understand the narratives (care, culturally responsive teaching, family, funds of knowledge, new teacher support group, parents, planning, race, racism, school climate, teacher beliefs, time, time-management). Other categories were discovered inductively through the review and comparison of all four teachers’ experiences as captured in the data (collaboration, discipline, elementary education, expert/expertise, immigration, Korean and Latino students, marginalized, mainstream,
At this point, I was pushed to take another look to find a more complex interpretation of the data. It is easy to run with initial findings and observations and epiphanies, but as narrative inquiry explains, while there is no one correct interpretation of the field, there are better and worse interpretations of the data (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000). It is only through diligence that a researcher can struggle toward and come as close as possible to the best, most complex and complete picture of schools, teachers, and students.

Therefore, as codes and themes emerged, all theories were retested for negative case examples (Glesne, 1998). For example, exploring the negative case examples of the culturally responsive teaching theme provided a more complex and complete understanding of this category and code. I began to see that clear patterns emerged regarding the practice of culturally responsive pedagogy, but patterns also developed around the absence of this practice as well. This propelled the analysis to investigate more fully the reasons behind the practice of culturally responsive teaching (as broadly defined) and the barriers preventing it as well. In addition, a new, more complex definition of culturally responsive teaching emerged based upon the data and the teaching context.

During this process, I started to recognize the limitations of my initial focus on the individual beliefs of new teachers, and I more clearly understood the role school structures and bureaucracies played—both overtly and covertly—in the lives of the teachers and their students. A shift from disappointment and judgment (coming from my own positionality as a social justice ESL teacher) toward a more compassionate and complex understanding of the stories occurred. With this new lens through which to analyze the data, a refinement of codes
and themes created a more concrete understanding of the story of these teachers and their context.

The analysis of this theme became more complex as did the coding relating to this theme. For example, culturally responsive teaching was an initial code that was refined and developed throughout the formal period of analysis. Initially the code was simply CRT. However, I was also looking for connections between teacher beliefs and CRT and so the code, CRT/B (culturally responsive teaching/beliefs) was created. As I became aware of the importance of coding the practice of CRT as well as the absence of its practice, the code of – CRT emerged. My analysis finally began to systematically explore the role of structure and CRT, and the code of CRT/S was created to represent and document those important intersections in the data.

Even though my approach to analysis diligently worked to understand the complexity of the research encounter, I wanted to check my interpretations and analysis of the data with another person invested in the study. I determined the necessity of member checking to ensure that my assumptions, perspective, and subjectivities were countered by another’s understanding and interpretation of the story. In order to do this, I contacted Sarah and asked her to comment on both my general approach to the dissertation and emerging themes. I also asked her to read drafts of chapters in order to further inform the process.

While analysis continued throughout the writing process, codes, themes, quotes, and theoretical frames behind it all were laid out in over fifty files, word-documents, excel tables, and notepads. The process of selecting quotes to include in the narrative was a final aspect of formal analysis. Once the initial analysis and themes were laid out and corroborated through member checking, the selection of representative quotes provided another opportunity to
check and double check my interpretations. As I read through quotes filed under each theme, I was able to review, compare, confirm, and reject interpretations. I was able to quantify, in a sense, the strength of my analysis as I counted, charted, and selected quotes that best told the story.

This dissertation is the result of over a year of data collection and many more months of analysis and writing. While I chose to focus in on Sarah’s narrative, I knew it was important to also provide the reader with enough of the context to understand her story and describe its meaning for me as a researcher. This painstaking process involved selecting what and how to articulate the multiple, complex and changing narratives. I do not claim to have described everything perfectly, but I have strived and struggled to be as diligent and transparent as possible.

_Toward writing and making meaning._ While I wanted to fill a gap in the research literature by focusing on the first year of four ESL teachers, I was also committed to finding ways to reciprocate as a researcher and former teacher. One way this was accomplished was through the formation of a new teacher support group, where we met once per month for an hour or two to talk, share, and find support and resources. These two aspects of analysis were greatly influenced by the study’s conceptual framework—political and ideological clarity and care. This conceptual and theoretical perspective helped me understand both the need to fill the language and culture gap in the first year teacher literature, and orient the research, analysis, and writing in an ethical, situated, and caring manner. In this way, political and ideological clarity and care helped conceptualize and ground every aspect of the research encounter.
The new teacher support group meetings also played an important methodological role in the study and served as monthly focus groups. While there are a number of papers that could be written from these data alone, these meetings—where the teachers could share their own stories with each other—mostly provided context for the work I did in the classroom with Sarah. An important methodological aspect of these meetings was the manner in which these teachers thoughtfully answered any questions I posed as well as initiated their own topics of conversation. They took charge of the discussion and, in many ways, set the research agenda. While I was interested in funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005) and culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995), they were much more interested in discussing collaboration, school relationships, and the status of ESL teachers and their students. Through ongoing analysis, I realized that these themes were important to the teachers and to the overall research study and warranted closer attention.

These meetings also pointed out how Sarah’s teaching context set her apart from the other three teachers in this study. While all of the schools had similar demographics, each school’s approach to teaching ESL students was locally controlled. The decision of Saunders Middle School to have an 8th grade, all Latino ESL class taught by the first year ESL teacher put Sarah on a unique journey her first year. The demands of that one class pushed her to use (and sometimes embrace) a culturally responsive pedagogy in a way unparalleled by the other three teachers. Sarah’s classroom became the setting for other important themes, including culturally responsive teaching and the power and pervasiveness of school structures.

Within these broad topics lie the detailed and unique narratives that the analysis chapters of this dissertation will attempt to tell. While the issues the teachers revisited month
after month illuminate topics and perspectives important to their individual lives and classrooms, they also inform a variety of situations where educators work with new teachers and culturally and linguistically diverse students. Sarah’s rich narrative is filled with frustration, marginalization, and bright moments in between the harsh realities of bureaucracy and the structures of inequitable schooling. Her very individual story reaches beyond her classroom and requires teacher educators (including myself) to interrogate current methods, charging us to find better ways to prepare young teachers with political and ideological clarity and care for the realities of today’s public schools.

Limitations of the Study

I believe the biggest limitation of this study relates to the fact that the context of the particular school system does not represent the actual demographic shift going on statewide. In some respects, this research will pertain only to a very specific language minority population. In many ways, the four ESL teachers were English-as-a-foreign-language teachers, and the majority of their students will return to their home countries in a few years. Many of their students were privileged because of their upper middle-class status, and were supported by private tutors, bilingual parents, and stay-at-home mothers. In addition, there were striking discrepancies in academic achievement between the Korean, Japanese, Taiwanese, and Chinese students and the majority of the Latino students, and these differences warranted careful consideration. It is important not oversimplify these groups of kids because there were significant individual and complex differences within ethnic groups. My point is that the unique nature of this context had its limitations, yet it also provided an
important look at the inequitable manner in which ESL students were received by the teachers and larger school community and country.

Another limitation of the study was the tension between breadth and depth. Only using four focal teachers was a compromise. This choice allowed me to explore four different contexts within one school system. As the study has evolved, one of the four teachers requested my support far more than the other three, and in many ways I was able to focus more attention on her particular situation and this produced a more complete portrait of her first year of teaching. My choice to focus on a more in depth understanding of one first year ESL teacher and her particular context had benefits and drawbacks. One benefit was her all Latino, 8\textsuperscript{th} grade class which gave the study access to a context that much more closely resembled the “typical” demographic seen across the state. This context provided findings that can better speak to the issues many teachers face in today’s schools. Another benefit of this focus was that it made it possible to understand, as completely as possible, the dynamic and multifaceted classroom community. It takes frequent, regular, and consistent observations to comprehend the complex day to day life of a teacher. Spread equally between the four teachers, I would have missed more.

On the other hand, I would have liked to have worked with more teachers in two or three school systems in order to gain a more comprehensive look at first year ESL teachers across a larger range of teaching contexts. In addition, due to my focus on Sarah’s Latino 8\textsuperscript{th} graders, less attention was given to the experiences of her Korean and Burmese students (not to mention the students in the other 3 teachers’ classes). While these students do not represent the overwhelming majority of immigrant students in the state, they do represent the vast diversity of the state’s student population. Their unique stories, voices, and perspective
are valuable and deserve attention. While they did play an important role in this research by providing contrast and context, their experience (in its own right) is certainly a consideration worth bringing into future research and writing endeavors.

In addition, narrative inquiry has some limitations. Critiques of narrative inquiry often cite the ambiguity and subjective nature of the work. Clandinin and Connelly (2000), however, argue that ambiguity, complexity, difficulty, and uncertainty are characteristics of any real research setting, and are therefore characteristics of any inquiry. They acknowledge and embrace the subjective nature of the work, while also arguing against those who imply that only relativism—the notion that all interpretations of events are all equally valid—can emerge from narrative inquiry. As Clandinin and Connelly write, “From a narrative inquiry point of view, there are, based on the evidence, the field texts, both better and poorer interpretations” of the story (p. 2000, p. 85).

While there is no one “truth” to be captured, when well done, research can have something important and meaningful to say about the world. Though my study had flaws and limitations, I am confident it produced important and meaningful new knowledge about first year ESL teachers working with culturally and linguistically diverse youth. When I began this research, I was focused on personal beliefs and culturally responsive pedagogy. Political and ideological clarity and care continued to be an important lens to situate the study, but it changed and evolved to include an important discussion of the larger structural and contextual factors that influence teachers and their practice. In thinking about personal characteristics, structures, and the classroom practices and beliefs of new ESL teachers, this study revealed the important narrative of one teacher in particular. In addition, political and ideological clarity and care pushed the research to continue to pursue a greater, practical
understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy in all its complexity. My own political and ideological clarity and care pushed me to seek reciprocity and caring research relationships, and through a new teacher support group and individual interviews, the voices of four first year ESL teachers emerged and helped guide the study.
Chapter Four:  
Marginalized Experts—The Unique Position of First Year ESL Teachers

Introduction

Challenges outlined in the first year teacher literature provide an interesting lens through which to consider and better understand the unique context and position of the new ESL teachers in this study. I attempted this analysis with caution considering the particular contexts in which these teachers worked, as well as the possible effect of a new teacher support group and the in-class support and mentoring I provided throughout the inquiry. In general, some of the common challenges faced by new teachers cited in the literature proved to be hurdles for the ESL teachers as well, but other concerns did not emerge for these teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Other typical first year challenges played out in varied and complex ways for the individual ESL teachers. In addition, the teachers seemed to grapple with a variety of ESL-specific concerns not found in the first year teacher literature. These ESL-specific challenges, interpreted through the lens of political and ideological clarity and care, help fill a significant gap in the literature and illuminate the experiences and position of ESL teachers and their culturally and linguistically diverse students.

This analysis chapter will first review the body of first year teacher literature. It will then explore the intersections of the first year teacher literature and the experiences of the four ESL teachers in this study. After exploring these challenges and how they relate to new ESL teachers, the chapter will then introduce and explore the teacher generated topics that
these four teachers raised during new teacher support group meetings. Their interest in discussing marginalization, relationships with teachers, the unique context of ESL, and collaboration highlights the position these teachers filled as they worked to educate themselves, their students, and other teachers in their schools.

First Year Teacher Literature

While past first year teacher studies have rarely addressed issues of language and culture explicitly, the first year has been well documented by researchers using a variety of theoretical perspectives (Bullough, 1989; 1990; Bullough et al, 1991; Deal & Chatman, 1989; Grossman, 1990; Herbert & Worthy, 2001; Harris, 1995; Mayes & Maile, 2004; Hollingsworth, 1992; Rogers & Babinski, 2002; Veenman, 1984). In general, the first year of teaching is described in the literature as being difficult, frustrating, isolating, and disorientating for new teachers.

Many studies have used the lens of socialization to look at the problems faced by first year teachers (O’Connell Rust, 1994; Olson & Osborne, 1991; Veenman, 1984; Bullough et al, 1991; Deal & Chatman, 1989) and the characteristics of successful first year teachers (Bullough, 1989; Herbert & Worthy, 2001). Other studies have used the lens of teacher knowledge (Grossman, 1990), teacher beliefs (Mayes & Maile, 2004), teacher identity (Harris, 1995; Bullough et al, 1991), and teacher expectations (Weinstien, 1988). Another set of studies has looked to the first year of teaching in order to learn how to best help new teachers through new teacher support groups (Harris, 1995; Hollingsworth, 1992; Rogers & Babinski, 2002).
While some studies have attempted to describe successful first year teachers, the overwhelming majority have attempted to learn about the emotional, physical, social, and psychological (Rogers & Babinski, 2002) challenges faced by first year teachers. Some common concerns cited in the literature are unrealistic expectations or beliefs of the new teachers, ineffective student teaching experiences and teacher education programs, and the characteristics of the school environment (Herbert & Worthy, 2001). For a variety of reasons (organizational, administrative, interpersonal), schools generally fail to support new teachers. First year teachers often get difficult class assignments, a schedule that provides little time for planning or reflection, and little or no mentoring (Herbert & Worthy, 2001). Both the time demands of the job and the individualistic culture of most schools create a situation where new teachers often feel isolated and often become exhausted, frustrated, and overwhelmed (Rogers & Babinski, 2002).

Veenman (1984) cited common first year teacher problems that other researchers have subsequently described in their research as well (Bullough, 1989; Grossman, 1990). The list includes problems with discipline and classroom management, motivating students, dealing with students’ individual differences, planning curriculum, assessing student work, relationships with parents, general organizational issues, and insufficient materials or supplies. Another important challenge faced by new teachers is finding a balance between work and home lives (Bullough et al, 1991). While there are successful first year teachers described in the literature who suffer few of these problems, most new teachers experience many, if not all of these challenges as they move through their first year of teaching.

Studies focused on second and foreign language teachers are far less frequently documented in the first year teacher literature (Richards & Pennington, 1998). Richard and
Pennington’s (1998) study focused on English teachers in Hong Kong and how they developed a simplified working model of teaching once in the classroom context. Other work has looked at foreign language student teachers (Moran, 1996) and second and third year ESL teachers (Liggett, 2005) in American classrooms. However, the lack of studies focusing on first year teachers working with culturally and linguistically diverse students is obvious and problematic. There is a need to explore the first year of ESL teachers working with language minority students as well as mainstream teachers working with diverse learners—soon to be the majority in American classrooms (Kasarda & Johnson, 2006; Murdock, 2006).

While there is little research to cite, first year ESL teachers, like all teachers, must grapple with the challenges and problems described above. In addition, there are a number of other unique demands that ESL teachers must face. They must have the professional knowledge required to teach English grammar and academic English, but they are also called upon to advocate for equitable treatment of ESL students in the mainstream classroom, and to serve as cultural brokers, community liaisons, and educators of mainstream teachers (Ovando et al, 2006). ESL depends greatly on the teaching context. Some teachers work with small groups and only teach English, others are required to teach sheltered biology to a class of 30 ESL students, still others must teach and collaborate with mainstream teachers.

All classrooms are becoming significantly more complex as students from a variety of language minority backgrounds become the new mainstream in many U.S. public schools (Villalva, 2008). Immigrant students come to the ESL classroom from a variety of countries, with varying degrees of formal schooling, and span the socioeconomic spectrum. ESL teachers must know their students’ English language proficiency, literacy backgrounds,
educational experiences, and plan for their instruction accordingly. ESL teachers must help
students adjust to their new school, community, and culture. They must figure out how to
teach English, while at the same time thinking about the grade-level academic content.
Planning for novice teachers is an enormous challenge and it is even more complex for ESL
teachers who must navigate their own curriculum and the mainstream curricula, often for
several grade levels, simultaneously. All of these pressures occur within the context of
nation and state-level accountability measures that dominate schools today.

Due to these demands, ESL can easily become highly subtractive (Valenzuela, 1999) if new teachers, in the survival stage of development (Veenman, 1984), can only manage to
teach English language lessons at the expense of the native language and culture of their
students (Valenzuela, 1999; Valdés, 1996). At the same time, there is also great potential in
this first year when teachers are forming their initial identities as educators (Danielwicz,
2001). Providing support for new teachers, especially teachers working with culturally and
linguistically diverse youth, is of great importance, considering the changing demographics
in America’s classrooms. What becomes clear is that a pre-service teacher education
program could never fully prepare novice ESL teachers for the complex and demanding
contexts in which they will teach. The requisite professional knowledge and self-reflection
demand continued support after graduation.

More specifically, some studies have explored ways to continue the support and the
professional development of new teachers in the first year. These studies include research on
support groups (Hollingsworth, 1992; Harris, 1995; Rogers & Babinski, 2002), mentoring
programs (Montgomery, 1999; Feiman-Nemser et al, 1999b), and administrative support
(Renard, 2003). Of particular interest for this study is the research on new teacher support
groups because this literature addresses the complex needs of new teachers and seeks meaningful ways for teacher educators to continue to support students after graduation. While teacher educators cannot control on site mentors or administrative support for new teachers after graduation, they can provide opportunities for new teachers to meet with other novice teachers and supportive university mentors for collaborative conversations.

**Common Challenges**

On a warm August morning, I met with the four first year ESL teachers to discuss our research project and to check-in before the first day of school. They were anticipating a new teacher orientation meeting for all first year teachers in the school district and four teacher-work-days to get ready for the semester. Rebecca was bored with summer and ready to get to work, Sarah and Lynda had kept busy over the summer and looked forward to meeting their students, and Kelly had just received her teaching schedule and felt better knowing what to expect. They chatted animatedly about what they were going to do on the first day of school with students and they shared information about an upcoming training for administering the IPT (an English language proficiency assessment used state-wide). They had completed a rigorous, 12-month Master of Arts in Teaching program and were looking forward to putting their newly earned degrees and knowledge to good use. As Rebecca said, “It is time to put our money where our mouth is.” Six weeks later, we met for our first new teacher support meeting and many of the concerns that would challenge them for the entire year were already apparent.

**Limited resources and insufficient materials.** Like many new teachers, some of their concerns centered around limited resources and insufficient materials as well as curriculum
planning and assessment (Veenman, 1984). At the middle school level, Sarah was the most vocal about her lack of resources and materials. She complained about the difference between her collection of books and those of the Language Arts teachers in her school. She was also having difficulty finding resources in the school that, as she put it, “reflect[ed] students’ lives.” Kelly had been given money to purchase materials, but had very little time to make decisions about what to buy. She felt grateful to have some resources, but was frustrated that her purchases had to be so rushed and was overwhelmed by these decisions as a first year teacher. At the elementary level, both Lynda and Rebecca were willing to create materials from scratch when needed, but looked forward to building their classroom libraries with more multicultural books in the years to come.

Planning. Curriculum planning has been documented as a significant issue for most new teachers (Veenman, 1984; Bullough, 1990). Even with a set curriculum, pacing guide, and text books, most new teachers find that planning lessons takes a great deal of effort and time (Veenman, 1984; Bullough, 1990). Teacher education programs often teach preservice teachers how to plan elaborate, detailed, and creative lessons or unit plans. These lessons, frequently written up for methods courses, are a good exercise, but are rarely practical or possible in the real life of a beginning teacher. The first year ESL teachers in this study were also overwhelmed with curriculum planning, but their concerns seemed to be exacerbated by the fact that there was a very broad and open standard course of study and no curriculum or pacing guide for ESL.

They recognized the benefit of having freedom in planning and the ability to be student-centered, but were overwhelmed by the lack of parameters. In addition, they had learned in their teacher education program (See Appendix G) to align their own ESL
curriculum and the mainstream curricula at the same time. They worried about finding ways to teach the English language through the content in a way that would allow their students to keep up with their mainstream peers.

Long-term planning was a theme that emerged early in the study and these issues continued to be raised frequently throughout the year by all four of the teachers. In the October new teacher support meeting, Rebecca shared her concern with the other teachers who agreed with her assessment:

Rebecca—My biggest problem is long-term planning.

Lynda—I wrote the same thing.

Sarah—Me too.

Rebecca—I want to do everything in units because it makes it so much easier for me. I’m teaching 4 grade-levels and I can never use the same lesson twice. I have to do units so I don’t pull my hair out. I’ve got 6th grade covered because I’m teaching language arts and it just makes sense to follow that curriculum, but 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades… they are so different per grade-level. I would insult my 5th graders if I tried to do what I do with my 3rd graders… and it is so hard to keep up with the curriculum in all those classrooms…. not to mention the kids’ language levels and needs.

Negotiating their own lessons with grade-level content curriculum while taking into account a diverse group of students in terms of age, academic background, and English proficiency, caused a lot of stress for all four teachers. Throughout the year they wrestled with planning for their English language learners.

Assessment. All four teachers mentioned, more than once, the difficulty of striking a balance between wanting to have a vision of long term goals, but also wanting it to respond to kids on a day to day basis depending on their changing needs and the needs of their mainstream classrooms. In addition, they found it hard to predict the kinds of things their kids were going to need, language-wise, a month down the road. They all recognized the
need for formal and informal assessments to inform their planning, but were often overwhelmed by this aspect of teaching as well. Kelly said, “I know I need to know where they are so I can move them forward, but it is so hard to really figure out exactly… you know assess where they are… there is the language and the academics to think about.” Variations of this quote were sprinkled throughout the transcripts and fieldnotes reflecting the universality of this dilemma for the four women. Planning and assessment are closely tied together and so it is not surprising that the teachers found assessment to be another challenge they shared with other first year teachers.

ESL Teachers as Exceptional First Year Teachers

Individual Differences. Dealing with students’ individual differences (Veenman, 1984) was one challenge presented in the first year teacher literature that did not seem to be an issue for any of the four ESL teachers. While many teachers do not anticipate working with diverse learners, ESL teachers specifically choose to educate learners from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. These four ESL teachers all had different reasons for deciding to become ESL teachers and their classrooms held a variety of students, but they all wanted to work in a teaching context where individual differences were seen as an asset and not a problem. Sarah, who worked with predominantly Korean and Latino students, said, “This is what I am supposed to be doing and I’m doing it. I enjoy working with all types of students and meeting their individual needs. I do have knowledge of multiple cultures and I feel like that is one of my strengths that came through in my interview and helped get me my job.”
They anticipated the individual needs of their students in terms of language, culture, and academic background and they approached their teaching with these individual differences in mind. It wasn’t easy to differentiate instruction in classes that had a wide range of abilities, but the comparatively small number of students in their classes and their student-centered approach to teaching made it possible. In a November interview, Sarah shared the following:

ESL class is the most unique and flexible context… on the one hand it is great and on the other hand it is like, “What am I going to do?” But it is amazing because kids can have a say in the curriculum. In other classes it’s like, “Do this and this and this!” But in your ESL classes, you can really be culturally responsive if you take advantage of the flexibility and go with your students’ individual interests and needs.

In this quote, she articulates her orientation to the classroom and her ability and desire to approach her students as individuals and to make her curriculum as student-centered as possible. While the degree to which the four teachers embraced a culturally responsive pedagogy in their classes differed, my fieldnotes and transcripts make a clear case that all four of the teachers were highly student-centered in their practice and were capable of meeting the individual needs of their diverse students on a day-to-day basis.

This distinction between these four first year ESL teachers and those portrayed in the traditional first year teacher literature is important. Some of this difference could be attributed to the typical ESL context where teachers generally teach smaller classes and are creating their own curriculum based upon the individual needs of their students. Another reason behind this distinction could be that these teachers were not only prepared in their teacher education program to work with culturally and linguistically diverse students, but they proactively chose to do so. In addition, ESL teaching likely draws individuals who are already pre-disposed to value diversity. They saw the variety of languages and cultures
represented in their classrooms as assets to the public schools and not as obstacles to learning. In a written reflection from November of 2006, Sarah stated:

> Coming from an anthropology background and being familiar or having at least peripheral knowledge about many of my students’ cultures, I believe cultural responsiveness is a natural, ongoing, and essential facet of my ESL teaching style. Wherever possible, I use students’ cultural experiences or bits of information about their backgrounds to draw them in—whether it’s using a few Spanish words to catch a student’s attention, or chatting about pupusas in El Salvador, or having my Muslim students share why they were absent to celebrate Eid the day before, or spending a few minutes learning how to pronounce Montagnard names. This communicates to them that I believe that they are capable of being someone smart and important in life and in our school. Because they’re already important to me, even if the rest of the school doesn’t notice them.

Meeting the individual needs of her students was central to her teaching philosophy and approach. This quote represents an orientation to the field articulated and acted upon by all four teachers to varying degrees. This orientation to teaching and learning set these ESL teachers apart from many of their colleagues.

*Complex Experiences*

Other typical challenges cited in the new teacher literature played out in a variety of ways for these new ESL teachers. One reason their experiences varied so widely was due to each school’s unique structure and approach to teaching English language learners. Lynda taught pull-out ESL classes with small groups of one to four children while Kelly taught larger ESL and sheltered content classes with up to 15 students (still a small group by most standards). Rebecca (split between two schools) had an extremely full schedule while Sarah had relatively large blocks of planning time set aside and spent much of her day in collaborative classes. This section will explore the ways challenges relating to discipline,
classroom management, student motivation, mentoring, and teaching schedules were uniquely experienced by each of the first year ESL teachers.

**Discipline, classroom management, and student motivation.** The interrelated challenges of discipline, classroom management, and student motivation varied significantly for each teacher and in each teaching context (even within the same school). All of the teachers were very well organized and classroom management in terms of pacing, the use of cooperative learning, and classroom procedures was generally strong. Kelly used humor and patience and the support of school social workers to handle the discipline challenges caused by a couple of her middle school students. Rebecca’s 6th grade ESL class was one of the largest with 15 students, but these newcomers from all over the globe (Japan, Russia, Sweeden, Korea, Mexico, China, Ukraine) posed no discipline or motivation problems for her energetic teaching style.

Lynda worked with very young, predominantly Korean children in very small groups (1-4 students) and these issues were not concerns for her in her teaching life. On the other hand, Sarah worked with medium-sized groups (5-10 students) of middle school students but each class created different levels of concern regarding discipline and motivation. Her class of Korean and Latino sixth graders posed little challenge while her group of 8th grade Latino students required a great deal of energy in terms of discipline and motivation.

These brief descriptions of discipline, classroom management, and student motivation only begin to illustrate the unique context of the ESL classroom. My intention here is to point out the first year teacher literature’s failure to capture the varied teaching contexts that many ESL teachers encounter. While all of the four ESL teachers provide an interesting lens through which to think about teaching and learning, these issues of discipline, classroom
management, and student motivation will be discussed in greater detail in chapter five as they relate to Sarah’s experience with her two distinct ESL classes. Her particular story also illustrates how difficult class assignments, another common first year teacher challenge, can change the trajectory of a school year in dramatic ways. In her particular teaching environment, the intersections of race, class, and immigration status played out in interesting ways and provoked personal responses to discipline, motivation, and culturally responsive teaching.

Mentoring. While all four teachers had another ESL teacher colleague working at their school, the mentoring they received varied significantly. Lynda was one of two full-time ESL teachers at her school and the other ESL teacher was an experienced educator who had been running their school’s ESL program for a few years. In addition, her school housed a dual language program and those teachers were also familiar with second language acquisition. She got along with her ESL colleague and the school climate overall embraced their ELLs both academically and socially. She had the support of a more experienced ESL teacher to mentor her development as a new teacher.

Kelly, on the other hand, did not have an experienced ESL mentor/mentor on-site with her at Pine, but Rebecca was there with her in the mornings. These two first year ESL teachers supported each other as colleagues and as friends. In addition, Kelly contacted the school’s previous ESL teacher when she had logistical, pedagogical, or bureaucratic questions and the combination of these “mentors” allowed her to obtain the support she needed that first year.

Rebecca worked and shared a classroom with an experienced teacher at Grandview, but she did not consider this teacher to be her mentor. In fact, Rebecca handled most of the
required paperwork for the ESL program even though she was split between two schools and was a first year teacher. Sarah had a similar experience with the senior ESL teacher at her school, in that the other ESL teacher did not provide much bureaucratic or pedagogical mentoring or support. In contrast to Lynda’s context, Sarah’s school did not embrace their ESL population. While the senior ESL teacher had been working at the school for a number of years and was comfortable and very familiar with the school’s ESL program, Sarah was frustrated by the structure of the ESL program and felt unsupported by her “mentor.”

While the first year teacher literature cites a common challenge of little or no mentoring for novice teachers, mentoring looked very different in all four contexts for the ESL teachers in this study. While they were all fortunate to have another ESL teacher at their school, the amount of mentoring received (and/or perceived) by each teacher varied widely. In addition, the notion of mentoring was complicated by the new teacher support group. I was an unofficial mentor for all four teachers and while I provided varying degrees of support, they all knew they could call upon me in moments of need. In addition, the school system also had a full-time mentor teacher who observed and provided feedback and support for all of the first year teachers in the system.

In the new teacher support group meetings, the teachers received and provided mentoring and support for one another. They all brought different strengths to their first year of teaching and they shared these strengths with each other frequently and consistently. All four of the teachers expressed verbally and in written reflections that participating in the new teacher support group was beneficial for them personally and professionally. The data clearly reflect that the new teacher support group was successful as summed up by Sarah in a December interview:
The new teacher support group has been nothing but good. I am so grateful to have it because honestly there are some days when I just don’t think I could have done it. The support group for me... being able to talk to everyone once a month... knowing that somebody is out there who knows my experience as far as background in education and understanding somewhat what I’m going through and being an outsider too... like not involved in the school or in the school politics or anything like that... that has been nice. Especially with all of us in the same district... we can share ideas and support and gripes and everything but at the same time we’re at different schools. At different schools we are faced with the same problems and different problems... sometimes it is like well at least I don’t have that problem here or other times it is like well at least I’m not the only one who is dealing with that.

The new teacher support group meetings and my role in the research provided a great deal of support and mentoring. In addition, they provided the four first year ESL teachers with a time and place (in their very busy lives) to reflect upon their teaching.

Erratic schedules that provide little time for planning or reflection. When considering the common first year teacher challenge of schedules that provide little time for planning or reflection, it is important to note that the schedules for the four ESL teachers were constantly shifting, changing, and evolving throughout the year. The beginning of the year was either spent creating a schedule once students arrived or adjusting a schedule that no longer functioned once the students were assessed. At a panel presentation for pre-service ESL teachers in November, Lynda said, “It’s hard to do much planning or preparing before school starts at the elementary level because you don’t know your schedule. First you have to do the IPTs [English language proficiency test] and then there is the EOG [Standard End of Grade exam] practice test and so it’s like 3 weeks into the year before you actually figure out your schedule.” The finally established schedules continued to change throughout the year as new students registered for school, as students’ needs changed, and as the schools began preparing for the end of grade exams. Another consequence of the delay in establishing schedules is that ESL schedules must then fit into the constraints of all other
classes and programs that were created during those first three weeks of school. In essence, this delay often makes the placement and scheduling of ESL classes a bottom priority.

In addition, positions were adjusted during the first weeks of school depending on the number of students identified as limited English proficient (LEP). For example, Kelly started the school year as the only ESL teacher at her school. Once she figured out the high number of students she needed to serve, she ended up with no planning time during the day. A few weeks into the school year, Rebecca was reassigned to teach two periods a day at Pine to support the larger than expected number of English language learners and this gave Kelly some much needed planning time in the mornings. By the end of the year, however, Kelly was using her planning periods to tutor individual students who needed extra support and to collaborate with content teachers and the school social worker. As an itinerant teacher, Rebecca’s schedule was packed and her only planning time was used to travel from Pine to Randolph. As a result, she did almost all of her planning at home in the evenings.

Sarah had the most extensive planning period, but she also had the most demanding ESL class of the group and a large number of students to support throughout the school. Like the other three ESL teachers, she ended up using much of her planning time to coordinate with other teachers, counselors, and social workers and on administrative tasks. She also used this time to plan staff development workshops and to send out “modification of the week” emails to the content teachers in hopes that they would include their English language learners more effectively in their classrooms. Even though she only had two class periods a day to plan for, the other demands of the job and meetings made it difficult to take time to reflect on her practice during the school day.
Without time in their busy and constantly changing schedules to reflect on their practice, the first year ESL teachers appreciated the opportunity to do this once a month at the new teacher support group meetings. The monthly meetings were a designated time set aside to think and talk about their teaching practice and their lives as teachers. In a reflection, Kelly wrote, “It is as good for my mental health as it is for my teaching.” At a February new teacher support group, Rebecca stated, “It is good to be forced… in a good way… to meet and talk and think about what’s going on as teachers.” At a particularly difficult time in the school year, Sarah said, “I feel like I need the [new teacher support group] meetings, your [classroom] visits, and workshops to get out of bed in the morning because the job is so depressing. I’ve given up my lunch period to help with a student and to be honest, sometimes I feel like I’m just trying to survive to the end.” While I initially wanted these meetings to encourage and support culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2000, 2003; Ladson-Billngs, 1995) and funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005), I came to see the greater benefit they had on the mental health of all four teachers. I realized the value in providing opportunities for new teachers to reflect and share their teaching selves with each other. I also came to appreciate the issues they raised and discussed in these meetings aside from my own research agenda.

Teacher Generated Themes

I acknowledge that my interest in funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005), culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000, 2003; Ladson-Billngs, 1995), and political and ideological clarity and care oriented the research agenda significantly; however, I was also open to and intrigued by the variety of narratives I encountered in the lives of these four first
year ESL teachers. Even during the first two or three new teacher support group meetings, I began to see their interest in topics such as marginalization, collaboration, school relationships, and the status of ESL teachers as important narrative threads. These themes continued to dominate our conversations and they told important stories about the unique position of first year ESL teachers in their schools and orientations to the field. In the context of this particular school system, these teachers were marginalized experts and collaboration and school relationships highlight and illuminate the spaces occupied and status of the ESL teachers and their students.

The unique perspective and marginalized spaces of ESL. It became clear during our conversations and interviews that the teachers positioned themselves uniquely as ESL teachers. Part of this orientation or identity as ESL teachers seemed to stem from an understanding of themselves as teachers and advocates and from their ESL-specific role in classrooms. While all four teachers spoke to this theme frequently during the study, Sarah best articulated this point in a December interview:

CG—Do you see ESL as being similar to or different from other teaching jobs… or somewhere in-between?
Sarah—It is hugely different and that is something I have become more aware of now that I am full time. I wish we had training in counseling because I feel like I am half counselor, half teacher, and half advocate… and there is only one of me! ESL is very different. The PARS teacher [the district hired, full-time support person for new teachers] was saying that I see things from the side instead of from the front of the classroom and that this is why I am able to connect with students. I’m actually paying attention to what they are learning as opposed to, “What is my lesson today… you’re not getting my lesson… why aren’t you doing it my way.” I really appreciate that and I really am glad that I went into ESL for that reason because it is a whole different side of teaching. That makes me even more aware… even in my own teaching. I stop and make sure everyone gets it… everyone is writing it down. I see that in a lot of core classes—the teachers don’t take this time. One kid is sleeping, another is writing a note, another is drawing… it’s hard for the person at the front to see any of that.
While many mainstream teachers do a lot of teaching, counseling, and advocacy work, Sarah points out how the position and perspective of an ESL teacher is unique. In seeing a classroom from the side (both literally when standing in the back of a mainstream classroom and figuratively when focusing on the individual needs of her students), the perspective is different and one’s motivations and actions in the school are different as a result. I do not want to argue here that mainstream teachers do not want to have this view of their classrooms or students, but the pressures and structures of their job are different and position them at the front of the room. They must teach a large number of students a set curriculum. They do not have the built-in flexibility of an ESL teacher or the experience of watching classrooms from the side or back of the room. What became apparent in talking with the four ESL teachers was the fact that the mainstream teachers’ status at the front of the room often marginalized not only certain students, but the ESL teachers as well. Sarah best described this occurrence in a group meeting:

As far as who feels included, that is a different thing. On the surface, you have the differentiated classes and everybody is all together… except for the “gifted” students… they have their own hall and you never see them much, but I feel like a lot of my kids are included in a lot of things but only on the surface. Even in my collaborative classes I’m supposed to be in there and we are supposed to be working together, but I feel like I end up just working with my kids in the corner, either literally or figuratively.

This idea of marginalized ESL space—of being in the corner—came up a number of times. The most illustrative discussion of this issue was raised in the September group meeting when we were setting up our next meeting. We had decided to meet in Kelly’s classroom at Pine Middle school and she was giving directions to her room:

Kelly—My classroom is in 025. The 0 means it’s in the dungeon.

Lynda—Oh yeah, I’m in the basement too.
Sarah—Well, I’m in the closet… and I have to share it.

Kelly—And Rebecca’s office is her car!

While they all had relatively nice rooms, their descriptions of their locations say a lot. Kelly and Lynda found some benefit of being tucked away in that they were able to do their work without interruption of passersby and Rebecca found that the drive from one school to the next gave her a taste of the world outside of school. She said, “I get in my car, drink a diet coke, and listen to NPR or some music… for those ten minutes, I get to be a regular person.” Sarah however, was frustrated by her small, closet-like office that she shared with five specialist teachers. The fact that the content teachers she worked with assumed she had a classroom of her own, “a home base,” just made her feel even more marginalized in her school. Interestingly, her awareness of her unique perspective and marginalized space seemed to tie her even more closely to her students and to other marginalized students in the school:

It is funny because I have just become aware of how the main homeroom teacher is up in the front of the room with the “good” kids and I always go immediately to the back of the room with all the misfits… because they are the ones I see he isn’t paying any attention to and so I’m going to go talk to them because in the back of the classroom that’s where the ESL kids are, the ones who get sent to the break room, the ones who are behaviorally/emotionally disabled. I guess I always automatically gravitated toward them, but now that I’m aware of it, I do it on purpose…

This combination of the unique perspective and marginalized spaces occupied by the four first year ESL teachers colored their perspective of their schools, students, and other teachers.

_Relationships with other teachers._ While the ESL teachers collaborated and got along with mainstream teachers to varying degrees, they rarely identified with those classroom teachers. Instead, they seemed to build relationships with other
educators in their schools such as social workers, counselors, specialist teachers, and
other ESL teachers who were not considered to be mainstream teachers. In fieldnotes
from March 23rd, I wrote:

S is not building relationships with the teachers she is collaborating with, but she is
building relationships with the counselor, social worker, and special education
teacher. She said those teachers can really “look at the individual student instead of
grades or the whole class or the curriculum.” She said that they relate because they
care about these students and talk about them and see them as individuals and not just
as problems. As a teacher she said she feels “totally marginalized” and that she has
this status as “not a real teacher” because she works with “small groups of
marginalized kids.” K has also expressed some of these thoughts too. I know she has
talked about becoming good friends with the counselor at her school. She initially
spent a lot of time with her dealing with a situation with one particular student, but
now she talks with this teacher just about every day. She also considers Rebecca’s
presence each day to be “a lifesaver.”

This relationship building with other specialist teachers was most striking in the narratives of
Sarah and Kelly, but Rebecca also struggled some with her relationships with mainstream
teachers. Lynda seemed the most comfortable with the mainstream teachers at her school
and she worked, collaborated, and socialized with them easily. Lynda and Rebecca were
most likely to go to weekly social gatherings with their teaching colleagues.

It is very important not to misrepresent these complex issues as an “us versus them”
dichotomy between specialist educators and mainstream teachers. While the ESL teachers
were often frustrated by the treatment their students received in many of the mainstream
classrooms or by their own status in those classrooms, they understood the challenges those
teachers faced. My fieldnotes and transcripts clearly show that Sarah, Kelly, and Lynda were
very sympathetic to the demands put on mainstream teachers. Sarah stated in a February
interview:

One thing that has surprised me in terms of understanding why teachers do what they
do… why sometimes they have the reactions they have. As an outsider it is easy to
say they are lazy or horrible people, but the more I’m in it, the more I realize that they
are doing it to cope and survive. Sometimes you get to the point where you cannot handle one more email or phone call or... one more student ruining class. At the same time, I have a lot of favorite students and I have a really hard time seeing what happens to them and I feel like I can’t even say much about it because I don’t want to jeopardize my relationship with that teacher. The relationships with teachers has turned out to be one of the hardest things because I’m stuck off in a corner, my planning periods are different from everybody else’s, even the other elective teachers in the hall they see themselves as totally different from me... like they don’t have much affiliation with my program or my students. A lot of teachers... I have had a lot of teachers say, “He is your student... you need to work with your student... can’t you control your student.”

She was understanding of the plight of the content teachers, but loyal to her own students at the same time. She realized that the same structures that got in the way of many mainstream teachers effectively working with her English language learners, were the same structures that made it difficult for her to work effectively with the core teachers. These relationships and structures seemed to be highlighted by the school’s use of collaboration.

Collaboration. Research shows that co-teaching and collaboration can be extremely effective models to better educate students with special needs (Bear & Proctor, 1990; Harris et al., 1987; Klingner et al., 1998; Marston, 1996; Patriarca & Lamb, 1994; Schulte et al., 1990; Self et al., 1991). It is important to note that while collaboration is widely implemented for English language learners, no research has been conducted to support the assumption that these practices are beneficial for students acquiring English in the mainstream classroom. In addition, Magiera and Zigmond (2005) point out that the benefits of these co-teaching arrangements seem to be dependent upon “optimal teaching conditions” where the involved teachers have been trained in co-teaching/collaboration and when the teachers are provided co-planning time. Collaboration, as experienced by the four first year ESL teachers, corroborates this finding when applied to the ESL context.
All four of the first year ESL teachers collaborated in some way as part of their teaching day, but the practice of collaboration rarely worked well for the ESL teachers or their students. These encounters with their mainstream counterparts seemed to exacerbate their feelings of marginalization and frustration and failed to impact the classroom teachers’ practice or pedagogy. As first year teachers, they were novices, but they also believed that they had a certain expertise to share with their colleagues. However, due to the way collaboration was set up and implemented in the schools, the ESL teachers felt like marginalized experts. The following conversation at a new teacher support group meeting highlights some of these issues:

Sarah—I was called in last minute to translate for PEP (Personal Education Plan) meetings… I don’t mind it. Especially since they are my kids and I’d much rather have the parents talking to me than have them there just smiling at each other, but it is still kind of annoying to be pulled out of class or to get word last minute. The 6th grade team won’t tell me ahead of time when they have meetings. They’ll say, “Oh it’s on our team conference board, go look at it.” They don’t bother to tell me or include me. I’ve missed lots of meetings because I didn’t know. These are my kids… and I’m not included in discussions about their progress… and meeting their parents too. I think really it’s how the administration set that up for what I can tell… and from my experience so far. They put a mandate that we need to collaborate, but they haven't really supported it or said this is how it's going to work. They say, “You're working with her!” But they haven’t said how to work together…you’re going to be doing teamwork together… you’re going to be doing planning together. There hasn't been anything communicated explicitly. I mean, I wasn't even given the chance to introduce myself to the teachers I'm collaborating with. We never even got to meet each other before the first day of class. They’re like, “Oh… you're here. OK, go work with them.” So I feel like that set up the year and created a pattern for the rest of the year. I’m trying to fight that but it’s hard…

Rebecca—I don’t think it would matter. I mean honestly, you’re a second-rate citizen just by virtue of the trade. They think we’re resource teachers, specialist teachers. They figure if we had the skills, we’d be classroom teachers. This is the viewpoint… not that anyone would ever admit to this… that we are lesser… that if we could have been mainstream teachers we would have, but we didn’t have the skills or something as opposed to just caring about ELLs.

Sarah—Ironically we have highly specialized skills and knowledge…
Rebecca—Yeah, yeah…

Sarah—We could probably provide a much better perspective on these particular kids…

Lynda—And better instruction…

Sarah—They’re asking what do I do with these kids… you know what am I doing with them? But they still see us as, “Oh, you in the back.”

Rebecca—We’re there because the state says we have to be there… whereas they are there to do a job. We are not the real teachers. They are the real teachers and we are just there to help out… like a glorified TA.

Throughout the year, all four teachers frequently expressed their frustration with collaboration stemming from a variety of structural issues such as a lack of training, no designated co-planning time, and a general misuse of their time and expertise. While the ESL teachers had been trained in collaboration and had gained some positive experience with this model during their student-teaching, they were teaching in schools where they felt like little more than “glorified TAs.” Due to the ineffective implementation of collaboration and their sense of marginalization as ESL teachers, the first year teachers came to struggle with the task of collaborating with their colleagues. This was particularly pronounced in Sarah’s experience. Field notes from a March 23 visit and interview make this point:

Her response to my question, “What’s going well?” was that she hasn’t been going to collaboration classes because she has been testing kids and that this has made life a lot easier for her. I commented that it seemed like collaboration would be easy because you don’t have to plan for it. She said, “If you don’t care that kids are falling behind and can’t keep up with the teacher then it is easy. But if you care, it is emotionally and psychologically hard because you see how unfair and messed up it is and how much more support they need and you can’t provide enough… at least how [collaboration] is currently set up.”

Sarah was troubled by the treatment of her students in the school, but was always quick to point out the program’s inadequacies instead of blaming the core teachers alone. She understood that the structures that got in the way of meaningful collaboration were the
lack of training, zero co-planning, and insufficient time and resources. Still, she continued to try to find creative ways to get around ineffective collaboration set-up at her school. In September, she started sending “modification of the week” emails to all of the teachers of English language learners with tips and topics such as putting the agenda on the board, ways to be more aware of teacher-talk or lecture styles, and the importance of explicitly teaching key vocabulary. Within a few weeks, she began to get positive feedback from some teachers and administrators, teachers started suggesting topics for future emails, and a few teachers thanked her. This strategy made her presence, work, and her students more visible throughout the school. The impact of this work became even more visible toward the end of the first semester when she saw the impact of her emails:

[January 11] One of the early [emails] suggested giving newcomers a buddy, I recently sent out another one saying that now it was time to incorporate them into other groups… helping them or pushing them to interact with the rest of the class more and using English more. I sent it out and didn’t think anything of it, but when I went into the classrooms that week, the newcomers had been moved and were no longer clustered together… they were integrated into the classroom. That’s when I realized they actually read and reacted to the emails!

In addition to these emails, she planned two workshops on differentiating instruction and collaboration for the faculty and began serving on the school’s Student Support Team (SST). Her mentor teacher was not interested in helping her plan the workshops, but she was determined to contribute to the school’s staff development. She recognized that she was a first year teacher, but she wanted to be seen as a professional and she wanted to share her knowledge. After these workshops she stated, “I’m finally being seen as a professional and expert… they [the teachers she is collaborating with] are finally seeing me as an educator who has some knowledge… something to contribute.” While she wasn’t able to change the
structure that got in the way of more meaningful collaboration on a day-to-day basis, she was able to find other ways to contribute and work with her students’ core teachers.

Unique Perspective, Place, and Position—Concluding Thoughts

The purpose of this chapter was to investigate the first year teacher literature through the particular contexts and experiences of ESL teachers. What was uncovered was the unique status and station of novice ESL teachers. While they, like other first year teachers, struggled with some common first year challenges, their expertise in language and culture provided them with a different orientation and perspective in the classroom. They recognized the marginalized status of their students as well as their own often subsidiary position in their schools. However, they also recognized that they came to their positions with expertise and they all worked (to varying degrees) to communicate and share this knowledge with others in their school communities. The most interesting difference between these four first year ESL teachers and those found in the first year teacher literature, was their ability to not only “deal with” the individual differences of their students, but embrace and celebrate these differences in their classrooms.

In addition, exploration of the teacher generated topics that these four teachers raised during new teacher support group meetings, was another goal of this chapter. Their interest in discussing the unique perspective and marginalized spaces of ESL, relationships with other teachers, and collaboration allowed the research to explore narrative threads of importance to them. These discussions also provide a glimpse into their complex teaching lives and contexts. While their opinions and experiences were not uniform or static, there
was a general sense of solidarity and mutual understanding communicated during the new teacher support group meetings where they found consistent support and mentoring.

It is also my hope that this chapter provided a sense of the time, place, and spaces occupied by the four first year ESL teachers, especially that of Sarah. In the next chapter, I will focus on her narrative because it brings into focus the intersections of race, class, and immigration status and how school structures and students impact the implementation of culturally responsive teaching. This chapter has already shared some of her story and certainly has communicated her philosophical orientations to her field and her commitment to her students even under difficult circumstances. Her story is fraught with frustration and struggle, but it is also filled with moments of accomplishments complicated by the relational and structural world of schools and teaching.

Finally, I hope that these narratives can contribute to the field of teacher education and the preparation of future ESL teachers for the unique spaces occupied by teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse students. The lessons of this chapter also point out the need for mainstream teachers to be better prepared to meet the needs of the English language learners and to work collaboratively and productively with the ESL experts in their schools. Without training, administrative support, and thoughtful implementation, collaboration in the ESL context simply marginalizes both ESL teachers and their students instead of bringing them into an inclusive climate of learning and respect.
Chapter Five:
You Need More than Political and Ideological Clarity and Care—A Story of Culturally Responsive Teaching and Hope Between the Structures of Schooling

Introduction

As the last chapter illustrates, the first year teacher literature and research on collaboration have failed to include the experiences and perspectives of teachers of language minority students. This gap in past literature highlights the need to use a lens that acknowledges and highlights cultural and linguistic diversity in the classroom. This chapter emphasizes the importance of political and ideological clarity and care to address this gap. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the role institutional and societal structures (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Levinson & Holland, 1996) play in schools and society and how these structures influence the resources for and barriers to the enactment of culturally responsive pedagogy. This chapter will focus on the study’s analysis through political and ideological clarity and care, reproduction theory, cultural production theory, and hope in the spaces between the dialectical relationship between structure and agency.

You Need More Than Political and Ideological Clarity and Care

Billings, 1994, 1995, 2004) hold important implications for SLA theory and the practice of ESL teachers, this study also revealed the demands of structures and context on the day to day lives of teachers and students. These demands often create very real obstacles to the kinds of practices outlined in these theoretical understandings of teaching. Without political and ideological clarity and care, attempting to overcome these barriers is next to impossible. However, as Gitlin (1990) and Coble (2006) point out, it is unfair and overly simplistic to place the burden of reform movements on a teacher’s beliefs or personal characteristics alone. Recent scholars view schooling as a complex, multiple, interactive, social, and relational endeavor (Gitlin, 1990; Hawkins, 2004; Coble, 2006). If we are to help new teachers navigate and implement educational reform, larger structural, contextual, and relational factors must be included in the analysis. This chapter attempts to navigate these relationships between beliefs, practice, and larger structures of schools and society.

Initial lessons from the field. In the beginning of this research process, I naively believed that political and ideological clarity and care were enough to ensure new ESL teachers’ implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy. However, very early into data collection, I began to realize the very real effect of the larger structures of society and schooling on the lives of these teachers. These structures made it difficult, especially for new and uniquely positioned ESL teachers, to implement the kinds of teaching I had anticipated seeing. All four teachers were well versed in the practice of multicultural education, as it played a central role in their teacher preparation curriculum. They had all voiced a commitment to culturally responsive teaching in our meetings before the school year began. In addition, the new teacher support group was designed to provide opportunities for the teachers to reflect on and support each other’s (culturally responsive) practice. However, as
the first weeks and months passed, it became apparent that culturally responsive teaching was being pushed to the edges of the dialogue as other issues such as collaboration, school relationships, and other demands of the job dominated their attention and our conversations.

By the third new teacher support group meeting, however, I began to see some striking differences in the practice and discourse of Sarah and that of the other three teachers. While the three teachers’ limited talk of multicultural education and curriculum tended toward a more surface or “Heroes and Holidays” level (Banks, 2004; Kubota, 2004; Nieto, 1995), Sarah was struggling to comprehend her teaching context and practice through the framework of critical multicultural education’s culturally responsive teaching. She engaged with the group in discussions of collaboration and paperwork, but initiated a one-on-one dialogue with me regarding culturally responsive pedagogy. There are a number of factors that could explain the differences between Sarah and the other three teachers, but it seems that two important matters were her background in anthropology, and teaching a class that in many ways required her to be culturally responsive. As the year progressed and as I was invited into deeper involvement in Sarah’s classroom and teaching life, her story emerged as a powerful tale of one teacher’s struggle for change.

Sarah’s own background in anthropology and very strong political and ideological clarity and care, along with the demands of her 8th grade class, pushed her to engage in an internal and external struggle for herself and her students. I expected to see her put these ideals and beliefs into practice, but in very interesting ways, the structures of her school both demanded and hindered her culturally responsive attempts. As Levinson and Holland (1996) articulate though the concept of “cultural production,” we need to understand both the “resources for and constraints upon social action—the interplay of agency and structure” (p.
3). In order to fully comprehend Sarah’s story, reproduction theory and cultural production, along with political and ideological clarity and care, will be used to frame and conceptualize the discussion.

Reproduction theory and cultural production. Scholars such as Bowles and Gintis (1976), Apple (1979), and Giroux (1983) began an important critique of the long-held theory that schools were neutral institutions providing upward mobility to the masses. Instead, their work debunked the myth of meritocracy, showing schools to be political institutions playing a central role in reproducing hegemonic economic and societal structures. Adding to this literature, Bourdieu (1977) used the lens of culture and cultural capital to explain how schools and other structures privileged a certain kind of cultural knowledge blindly recognized as the universal and neutral norm. This understanding of culture helped explain the social and cultural reproduction of the middle and upper classes while conveniently blaming particular cultural groups for their own failure in school.

Many have since critiqued these early works for being overly deterministic and lacking complexity in their analyses, by failing to include issues of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, and other differences (Apple, 1984). Levinson and Holland (1996) point out that these social and cultural reproduction theories “rely on highly schematic and deterministic models of structure and culture, as well as simplistic models of the state and its supposed use of schools as instruments of control” (p. 7). However, the contributions these theorists have made to the sociology of education and our understanding of schools have been significant. At the same time, it is important to move beyond these theories in order to gain a more complex and flexible understanding of the socially constructed and contested nature of schools.
Cultural production, as outlined by Levinson and Holland (1996), critiques and builds upon these theories of reproduction and relates to the approaches of anthropology, cultural studies, media and communication studies to illuminate the “paradoxical positionalities of schooling” on a global scale (Levinson & Holland, 1996). Their work takes into account the multiple, complex, and historically situated contexts, identities, and ideologies that affect the lives of those involved in education (occurring inside and outside of schools). This theory speaks to Sarah’s story because it takes into account how “different models of the ‘educated person’ are historically produced and contested in sites, as both dominant and subordinate groups (and those, like teachers, who often stand ‘in between’) carry forth distinctive modalities of cultural production” (Levinson & Holland, 1996, 23).

The set-up. In order to understand Sarah’s context and the structures that both pushed her toward culturally responsive teaching and pulled her from it, it is important to understand how a great deal of her teaching situation had been created before the first day of school. About three weeks into the school year, I received an email from Sarah asking if I could meet with her to discuss one of her classes. We met at a coffee shop that afternoon to talk. My fieldnotes convey Sarah’s description of her 8th graders and how they came to be a class:

She began to describe her 8th grade class. 6 students—4 boys and 2 girls, all Mexican immigrants. The class had been named “ESL I” by the school counselor who created the course, but S soon realized that these students had all been in American schools for at least two years (most since elementary school). They were already fluent speakers of English (as assessed on the IPT) and had basically fallen through the cracks. She gathered from a couple teachers that no one else wanted to deal with these kids because they were not doing well in school and were considered “criminals” and “bad kids” by many teachers. S said the kids were really offended that they had to take ESL I so she went to the principal the first week and got the name of the course changed to ESL. She said that she had been trying to convince the kids that the class was important for them. She had been trying to connect with them and use lessons she thought they’d be interested in, but as of the third week of school, they were still resisting. She said they didn’t want to read and didn’t want to write and she was getting tired of pulling teeth.
It is important to note that while the 8\textsuperscript{th} graders were all fluent speakers of English (to varying degrees), their academic English was still developing at different paces, their Spanish language (especially literacy levels) varied widely, and their ages ranged from 13 to 15. What struck me most about this situation was the kids’ reaction to the class. They understood that they had been placed in a class that was below their ability and were upset and offended by this treatment. Though Sarah tried to alleviate this tension by getting the class’ name changed, the message had already been sent and Sarah was left alone to deal with the results of this set-up. Gaining the respect and attention of this class was, in many ways, an uphill battle from the very beginning.

The second aspect of this situation that deserves attention is the fact that while there was a more senior and experienced ESL teacher at Sarah’s school (her mentor, in fact), this class had been handed to the novice teacher. When Sarah’s mentor observed her teach the class in February, he commented that he would not have been able to teach this class. In fact, he shared that he had advised the counselor that it was not a good idea to put this group of kids together, but took no further action. When Sarah picked up her schedule in August, a few days before school was to start, she had no idea what she would encounter. Unfortunately, this situation was not surprising. A number of studies have shown that novice teachers are often handed the most challenging class assignments while senior teachers select the more “desirable” classes and/or schedules (Herbert & Worthy, 2001).

The challenging nature of this teaching context was clearly conveyed when, in late February, Sarah approached her principal to have one of the boys removed from the class. The principal, school counselor, and school police officer discussed her request in a meeting and as Sarah recalled, the principal exclaimed, “Who put this group of kids together in the
first place? This is an impossible combination.” One of the fascinating and unanticipated results of this “impossible combination” of kids would prove to be the impetus for Sarah’s journey with and struggle toward culturally responsive teaching and political and ideological clarity and care.

Segmented assimilation and reception. While Sarah’s 8th grade class was a constant challenge throughout the year, the contrast of her 6th grade ESL class helps illustrate some of the larger societal structures at play. The concept of segmented assimilation (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Zhou, 1997) can be helpful to address the complexities of immigration and the factors that produce upward or downward assimilation. The theory explains the complex process starting with the background factors affecting the first generation, such as parental human capital (educational background, financial standing, English proficiency), modes of incorporation (the social environment and structures that receive them), and the family structure (one or two parents, extended family networks).

Segmented assimilation theory then addresses intergenerational patterns such as dissonant acculturation (when the children and parents do not assimilate at the same rate—the children assimilate and the parents do not), consonant acculturation (when the children and parents experience assimilation or resist assimilation in a similar manner), and selective acculturation (when the children and parents both learn English and American customs, but also maintain strong ties to the ethnic community and culture). This theory continues to take into account external obstacles such as racial discrimination, bifurcated labor markets (the shrinking middle-class), and inner-city subcultures.

Segmented assimilation theory uses all of these background factors, intergenerational patterns, and external obstacles to help explain the experiences and forces affecting
immigrants. It is extremely important for educators to understand the complex processes that occur as first, second, and third generations of immigrants become established in this country. Without this knowledge, teachers may continue to incorrectly blame the low academic achievement of 1.5 and second generation immigrants on the students’ lack of motivation or parents who don’t value education, instead of considering the wide range of structural issues at play. In addition, this research highlights the different ways various groups are received by the U.S. and how this reception strongly affects the trajectory of first, second, and even third generations.

Using this lens to think about Sarah’s 6th graders provides a framework to help consider all of these complex and dynamic factors when considering her classes and her practice. Her 6th grade class was initially comprised of one Burmese and six Korean students. In the fall and winter, two Latino students (one from Mexico and one from El Salvador) joined the class of recent, 11 and 12 year-old immigrants. The Korean students had all entered the U.S. legally with their parents who were either visiting professors or graduate students at the area’s prestigious universities. Most had studied some English as a foreign language before arriving in the United States and had at least one parent with some proficiency in the English language. Many had private tutors to help with school work and English, all of the Korean students had a parent with an academic background who could support their schoolwork at home, and all arrived with a strong academic background in their first language. This is not to say that their experience in their American school was easy or universal, but it more closely resembled an exchange program because they would all return to Korea within one or two years.
These structures set these students up for success. In a sense, they could do well no matter what their teachers or schools did. Similar structures surrounded the majority of students taught by the other three ESL teachers in this study. While I do not want to downplay the accomplishments of these first year ESL teachers or the challenges faced by their students, I do want to highlight the role the context played. At the same time, it is important not to oversimplify the context or feed into the “model minority” stereotype (Lee, 1994). Each teacher was faced with a diverse classroom filled with students who came with a variety of strengths and needs. Just because many of their students arrived with certain structural advantages, does not mean they did not deserve the best, culturally responsive pedagogy and practice. While the other three ESL teachers in the study were not challenged in the same way Sarah was, they still frequently found themselves and their students on the margins of the school community. Their students were largely invisible in their schools, ignored by many of their mainstream teachers, but they did not encounter the sometimes hostile reception their Latino peers generally received. This distinction is of critical importance.

In addition to the Korean students, Sarah’s 6th grade class also included two Latino immigrant students, who in many ways, shared similar backgrounds with the 8th grade Latino students (Spanish language background, socioeconomic status in the U.S.). However, as newly arrived, first-generation immigrants, they experienced a dual frame of reference (Suárez-Orozco, 1989) whereas the 8th graders were 1.5 or second generation immigrants and saw themselves in relation to the larger racist and classist American structures at play in their lives (and were quick to point these out). In addition, the 6th graders were pre-adolescents while the 8th graders were well into their adolescent years. The majority of the Latino
students at the school were working class, but one of the 6th grade Latino students came from a more middle-class background. All of the Latino students in these two classes were undocumented and many were living in single parent households. The Burmese student was a political refugee, had experienced interruptions in schooling, and was part of a local social network of Burmese immigrants. Catching up with his peers academically was an extremely challenging situation both for him and for his teachers.

For Sarah, each day was a reminder of the very real impact these societal and institutional structures had on her students and on her experience as a first year teacher of culturally and linguistically diverse students. These structures were perceived on class, school, and larger societal levels. The needs and strengths of her two classes could not have been more different and yet she was determined to find ways to provide responsive and relevant pedagogies for all of her students. Before teaching, her understanding of the political and structural nature of schools was on an intellectual level. However, very early into her first year of teaching, these issues became real, tangible, and visible in her everyday teaching life. In a December interview, she commented on her politicization:

I think I’ve become more political as far as being in school… since I started teaching. I am starting to realize that I am on the front line working with these children because in some cases I am the only one who has the particular interests of that particular child in mind. Nobody else is aware of what is going on or they are ignorant of what is going on or they are unwilling to do anything about the situation or consider what they’re up against. I feel like I have a big sense of responsibility because I am more aware than a lot of people about what is really going on and how these kids are really doing and why they are not doing well and… sometimes I feel guilty that I am not doing as much as I could be because their needs are so many and keeping up with all these kids and all these teachers… it becomes overwhelming.
Hope

While social and cultural reproduction theory and segmented assimilation theory provide an important (though somewhat discouraging) perspective on the structures that clearly affect the lives of both Sarah and her students, there is also hope. Levinson and Holland (1996) acknowledge the interplay of agency and structure and Moll et al. (2006) write about “that space between structure and agency, between the received historical circumstances of a group, and the infinite variations that social agents are able to negotiate within a structure” (p. 43). As Willis (1981) writes, “Social agents are not passive bearers of ideology, but active appropriators who reduce existing structures only through struggle, contestation and a partial penetration of those structures” (p. 175). It is here that Sarah’s story is positioned, in those spaces, within that interplay between her political and ideological clarity and care and the structures of schooling. It is also here that the relational aspects of her context and her students’ agency played out in dynamic ways.

Pushed. I met with Sarah twice in September, at her request, to support her and to brainstorm ideas for her 8th grade class. She felt pretty good about her 6th grade class, but the 8th graders were resisting work and were challenging her authority and her curriculum. Some days they refused to work at all and she often felt like “pulling her hair out” by the end of the 55 minute period. She was empathetic and tried to understand their perspective—their anger at the way the class was created to begin with and their general distrust of teachers. My fieldnotes from one of our early conversations show both her empathy and her frustration:

She said that she is “heartbroken by the way other teachers talk about these kids” and really wants to “do them justice”, but doesn’t know what to do when she’s so overwhelmed and exhausted. She did a contract in the beginning of the year and has her discipline chart (visual warning, verbal, warning, etc.) just like she learned in the MAT [teacher education program], but it isn’t working. She’s been having them reading round-robin out of the ESL textbook because it’s the only way to keep them
on task, but acknowledged that this was pretty boring for everyone. She has had to force them write and they always complain. She said they are doing weekly vocabulary and they hate this too. She admitted thinking one morning, “OK you only have to occupy them for less than one hour… you can do this.” And felt terrible about this attitude. She confessed that she feels like she isn’t doing all she should be in terms of planning, but that she doesn’t have much support.

At this meeting, I asked her about her knowledge of these kids and of their interests. We brainstormed how she could get out of the “round-robin rut.” We talked about how some engaging, meaningful, and responsive lessons could make discipline much easier. She knew one student was interested in poetry and recalled doing a successful Latino poetry unit during her student-teaching. I promised to dig up some resources and she left the meeting with notes and ideas for ways to engage her 8th graders. She was frustrated, but determined to find a way to make progress with them. She acknowledged that while she could easily get her 6th graders to do just about everything, she had to really work to get anything from her 8th graders.

When I observed her teach these two classes back-to-back, I saw for myself how her 8th graders required and demanded good teaching. The 6th graders went along with her for the most part and didn’t point out the shortcomings of her lessons, but her 8th graders were quick to seize upon any hole in her lesson or pedagogy with disruptive behavior. If they weren’t interested in the topic, they rebelled. If her lesson lacked structure, they took advantage. However, by my third observation, I started to see her assert herself more and at the same time, respond with the beginnings of culturally responsive pedagogy. In an interview during this time, she explained how the challenges of the job were pushing her:

I need to be more assertive. I feel like I’ve already been pretty assertive for me… as far as my personality. I’m doing as well as I can, but I do need to push a little more. This is why I am glad to have the 8th grade class and some of these other challenges… I’m being pushed to go outside my normal boundaries. I’ve done a lot of things that I
never thought I’d do… but I realized I have to do this or that because it is important for them.

In many ways during those early weeks, she was just trying to survive, to get through the 55 minutes each day with them. But by early October, as they continued to push, she was responding. The first student-centered, culturally responsive lesson I observed involved self-selected report topics for a PowerPoint presentation. From talking with the core teachers, she knew they needed practice with research and presentations and she made the conscious decision to give them the choice of topic. This was a small step, but it had an observable effect. The girls’ chose to research mechanics and lowriders, two of the boys decided to research Gangs (getting into gangs, gang related poetry, and getting out of gangs), one selected the topic of graffiti art, and the fourth boy had not selected a topic by the end of the period. As we walked to her next class afterward, she admitted that it hadn’t gone as well as she had hoped, but she said, “At least they were finally interested in something we were doing.” I agreed and encouraged this kind of practice as a really good place to start.

*Gaining momentum.* While discipline troubles would never go away completely, things got much better as Sarah’s confidence grew and as she connected the curriculum more to the lives and interests of her kids. In an email, she wrote:

> Things are getting better, slowly but surely, and I actually have most of the day today to do lesson planning since the 6th graders are on a field trip. The only thing I might need in the next few weeks is any resources you happen to have on Latino/a poetry. I'm planning to start a mix of grammar, poetry, and perhaps reading *The Circuit* by Francisco Jimenez with my 8th grade class. I had a pretty good breakthrough with my 8th graders today that will lead perfectly into our Latino poetry unit.

The next time I saw Sarah teach, she had implemented the poetry unit and was also using short stories from Sandra Cisneros’ *The House on Mango Street* to start her class each day.
Fieldnotes from a visit during this time show the kind of curriculum she was creating specifically for this group of kids:

S gave each of her 8th graders a copy of *House on Mango Street* as they walked into class [she found enough copies in the library]. She suggested I read one story aloud but four of the students piped up and volunteered to read! So class started without a battle as they read 2 stories out loud…L and O put their heads down, but J, Y, A, and S were totally engaged—reading along and making relevant comments. It is great because each story is really short and engaging and they can get through one or two quickly each day. Once that was done, each of them also had a Latino poetry folder with 5 or 6 poems. S had simile, metaphor, idiom, personification, alliteration… and other poetic terms/literary terms up on the board. After a mini-lesson to teach the terms and model the activity (they were to find examples of these in the poems and underline with the coded colors). They did a really good job with a little support from me and S. They were also to be selecting their favorite poem to interpret and present to the class in a few days. This was by far the best class I have seen so far… in terms of behavior, engagement, academic language, cultural responsiveness, and rapport with the kids.

In addition to some positive steps in her classroom, Sarah was also participating in teacher-parent conferences. While she had not scheduled any of these meetings herself, she was making a point of attending as many as possible to meet parents and gain a better grasp of her students and their lives outside of the school. In addition, she had been called on to translate at a few conferences. She shared with me that a couple students had started to open up to her about situations at home. Again, these were small steps, but the impact was observable in the classroom. In early November, I wrote:

S really seems to be establishing a level of trust with her 8th graders. I am starting see a significant shift toward a better rapport with her students. She still has to work hard to keep them on task and some days are better than others, but there seems to be some mutual respect developing (still a ways to go, but definite improvement). I don’t see the struggle to get them reading and writing like I did in the beginning (at least when she is having them read or write something of relevance to them). Her lessons are more interesting, engaging. They seem to be tolerating each other (on bad days) and actually enjoying each other (on good days). It is getting better.
While not all of the lessons I observed were culturally responsive, the successful lessons (kids engaged, cooperating, and working) almost always were. It was striking how quickly the kids seemed to size up the day’s plan and decide whether or not to participate.

Things were getting better, but not everything was cured magically by political and ideological clarity and care or culturally responsive teaching. Sarah could never count on all of her 8\textsuperscript{th} graders attending her class from day to day. She never knew who might be skipping school or who had been sent to the “break room” (in school suspension) by another teacher. This made planning difficult and each day she had to gauge the chemistry of the students who were present to figure out how to proceed. In late November, Sarah caught a couple of her 8\textsuperscript{th} graders drinking alcohol in the hallway and her referral caused them to serve five days of in school suspension. The student who brought the alcohol had just been released from jail for theft during a class field trip. He had only been in class sporadically throughout the fall due to his trouble with his other teachers. This encounter disrupted the ground Sarah had gained building her classroom’s climate and relationships with her students. In many ways, December looked a lot like the beginning of the school year. The students were angry, and Sarah was exhausted. She was struggling with her 8\textsuperscript{th} graders, collaboration was frustrating, but her 6\textsuperscript{th} grade class was going well (even with a newcomer from El Salvador thrown into the mix in October). Toward the end of the semester she admitted, “I’m honestly just counting the days until the break.”

Regrouping and reconnecting. I have to admit that I was discouraged by the setback and was concerned that Sarah might give-up. She seemed so tired and worn out and ready to quit the last time I saw her in December, but she promised she would “persevere.” The
spring semester started with some positive signs. The students wrote stories about their vacations:

The 8th graders’ stories all involved the police. “We got busted for driving without a license.” “I got in trouble with the police for trespassing because a girl’s dad called the cops on us.” They all involved something of that nature, but one of them had a story about kissing a girl for the first time. S was so happy to read something positive… not about the police or getting in trouble or doing something really bad… something sweet and almost innocent. She said it was a cute story and he was really proud about it. She had been very pleased that they had all actually written good, detailed stories… even if most of them involved the cops. She said they almost seemed glad to be back in school.

However, as the novelty of school wore off, Sarah was once again struggling to get them to work. In addition, two, Mexican newcomers enrolled in mid January (a 6th grade girl and an 8th grade boy) and she was trying to figure out how to incorporate them into her classes. With the added pressure of the standardized end of grade tests (EOGs) coming up, she became stressed and was unsure what else she could do.

From the beginning of the year, Sarah and I had discussed visiting the homes of her 8th graders to learn more about them, to build their trust, to connect with their families, and to bring this knowledge into her classroom in a productive way. While she expressed an interest in doing this, she was already overwhelmed and it never materialized. In January, things were breaking down with her 8th graders again and she was struggling to maintain control over her class. She was still not ready to do a home visit, but she acknowledged she needed to do something to try to rebuild positive relationships with her students before it was too late. She asked me to teach her class for a couple days so she could have conferences with each student individually. She wanted to figure out what was going on, what she could do to regain a working relationship with them, and what goals they could set as a class.
While Sarah met with her students one-on-one, I ran her class for two days in late January. The first day, I used a lesson plan Sarah provided and they made me work hard to keep things under control. I wrote Sarah an email explaining how the hour went:

If it makes you feel any better, they made me work hard too! I had to move D away from Y and S... I made him sit right in front of me (that did help some). I had to grab a pen from J and O to keep them from throwing it in the classroom. I had to pull J into the hall and tell him to get his act together so the rest of the class could do their work. I had to practically sit on top of J and A to get them to work (but they eventually did). I had to put L in the back of the room with headphones on so he wouldn’t disturb anyone else and I had to redirect J and O from trying to go back there with L at least twice. I ran around like a chicken with my head cut off for the first 15 minutes not letting anyone get away with anything (this was hard) and then they seemed to give up and get to work and I could use some humor to get the energy up. Finally I could actually move around the room and help with individual questions.

The second day, I did an informal focus group with them to get their perspective on school and Sarah’s class. We talked about where they were from, where they wanted to go when they finished school, what they liked to do outside of school, and then I asked them to tell me about Sarah:

What do you think about this class, about S?
• She’s a nice teacher sometimes… but when we be doing a bunch of dumb stuff she gets mad or sad or something…

Why do you think she gets mad?
• Cause we don’t listen to her and stuff because sometimes class is boring and sometimes it is not… and then we’re not so bad.
• S is the nicest teacher I’ve had… definitely the nicest teacher here.
• Yeah, she’s buena gente.
• She’s the only one who speaks Spanish… and the guidance teacher and Ms. N… she was nice to me. She comes and helps me when something bad happens.

So if S is buena gente and all, then why do you give her so much grief?
• It’s just how we are… it is hard to change just for one class. You act this way all day long and it is hard to just shut it off… you know?

In the conferences, Sarah sat down with each student and talked with them about what was going on in her class, in school, and in their lives. She had a card where they brainstormed
strengths, things to work on, and goals for the end of the year. She felt good about having this time to spend with each student individually and felt much more connected with her class after the two days. However, it didn’t solve all her problems, as she shared in an email:

Unfortunately, they didn't bloom overnight (and I wasn't expecting them to). I couldn't even get my words out yesterday because they were all talking and distracting each other, culminating in the bursting of a rubber snow-globe pen owned by S with glitter and water and snow all over the tables, book bags, and me. I went through the idea of cooperation, new themed days each week, a "fresh start", and earning the right to watch a movie on Fridays. They seemed to hear parts of it and had a half-hearted response, but between S and Y and I throwing things across the room, I don't know how much good it did.

I haven't given up though. On the bright side (extremely good!), O and J will not be in class today because their core teachers are taking them out to lunch to celebrate their good grades! They are SO excited, and have been talking about it for weeks. I'm really glad their other teachers have been helping and caring for them too.

I have also emailed the principal and asked to move to a different (larger) classroom for 5th period, so everyone can have a "buffer zone" around them and we'll have more room to move. I am trying to rethink the lesson ideas and eliminate any direct teaching w/ me in front of the room. I am brainstorming problems and solutions. So I am determined to prevail.

She finally started the unit on *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child* by Francisco Jimenez. This was the third concerted attempt to bring authentic, meaningful, politically situated, culturally responsive curriculum into her 8th grade class. The book is a collection of autobiographical short stories about a young kid who illegally immigrates to the U.S. with is family in search of migrant agricultural work. Sarah was quick to point out that she understood that this book didn’t directly relate to their lives, but she believed there were many aspects they could connect with. She wanted to put it into a historical context and have them discuss and write about what has changed for Mexican immigrants since the 1930s and what was still the same. She envisioned an interdisciplinary unit. Ultimately, she wanted
them to write two or three short, autobiographical stories of their own to share with their teachers, administrators, friends, and family at an author’s event.

While the kids related to the stories and liked listening to them on tape, the unit got derailed when the two girls got into a huge fist fight during one of Sarah’s classes and then a particularly challenging 8\textsuperscript{th} grader threatened Sarah. While she had considered removing him from the class earlier in the year due to his disruptive behavior and hostile relationship with one of the girls in class, she believed her class was important for him and had resisted removing him:

L and Y’s issues came to a head so they did some counseling and took L off her team so they are separated now and she can have classes w/o him. They were also considering taking him out of her ESL class, but the only open space to put him in was debate class and it is taught by a “completely racist teacher” and she didn’t want to subject him to that. She decided it was better to let him stay in class. She said, “This is the only class where he is getting any Latino, culturally responsive teaching… any affirmation of his cultural identity. I don’t want to take him out of that if I can help it.”

But after his threatening outburst, she decided it was time to move him to another class. This didn’t solve all her problems, but it did make the climate in her class feel less strained and combative.

\textit{The moment.} After all of the ups and downs of the fall and winter, in early March I was witness to her most successful lesson of the year. My fieldnotes describe this moment that she had been working so hard to achieve:

S started class promptly with a quick write on half sheet of blue paper… “What do you do to attract a girl/boy that you like?” They got into this topic immediately and enjoyed sharing their ideas with the rest of the class. Then they started asking about the chart on the front board with their names on it. S explained that it was a new discipline chart and described how it would work (clear system, marks the board instead of engaging in a power struggle with them when they are disrupting learning, explicit consequences and rewards). Then she started to implement it consistently and fairly and it worked! I was shocked, but it actually seemed to help.
Then without skipping a beat, S handed out Gary Soto’s *Novio Boy: A Play*. It’s a play about a 9th grade Chicano and an 11th grade Chicana going on a first date. S assigned parts (avoided a power struggle). They were all excited to start reading this play about dating! O was reading really well (the main character), but was adding his own slang… “Ese” and other phrases in Spanish and then all of a sudden, the text started to include these words he had been adding to embellish the text! He exclaimed, “Hey, look! It’s talking like me!”

They all got into it… I could feel their enthusiasm… they were smiling and following along with the text and laughing. They got through the first 2 acts (the first is a conversation between boys and the second is between the girls). It was great! Just the right reading level… they could read it fluently, but still needed to stop and get help with some vocabulary and strategies, but not to the point of frustration… not too easy and not too hard. The Spanish and slang were mixed into the text naturally and were very validating for the kids.

S and Y were both having a little more difficulty reading it, so O started to help them, in a positive way, with how to pronounce words and things like that but without any attitude. He seemed proud to be such a strong reader and this was reinforced positively instead of negatively by the rest of the class… no mean comments. D was a little challenging… he fell asleep a couple times (even with me sitting right next to him). They finished the two acts and as they were leaving for their next class, they asked if they could read more tomorrow… “Please miss, can we read it again tomorrow?”

Notes to self:
S has been trying all year to get this group under control and she did it today through a combination of a new discipline plan and a really engaging, responsive, and fun lesson. She just got this play recently because there was some extra ESL money. She beamed afterward, “That was the best class of the whole year… and better than I ever had dreamed possible!” I was so glad to have been there to witness it.

She said that on Friday she decided that there was so much tension in the class that it was impossible for anyone to learn in there. So she decided she needed to make a gesture to try to lighten it up a little. So before class, she went out and bought some snacks and got a video (*West Side Story*) and she acknowledged that everyone was really stressed out and she wanted them to have a little fun together… “To chill out and break this pattern.” This was last Friday and then Monday (today) she came in with the behavior chart and this great lesson. Wow!

Seeing her achieve this kind of practice was thrilling. She looked like a veteran teacher who knew her kids—their interests, their academic needs—and was able to translate this into
effective pedagogy in the classroom. While I never saw this kind of perfection again, I did continue to see student-centered and culturally responsive teaching at work in her classes.

Finding spaces for making change. Sarah and her students experienced ups and downs throughout the rest of the year, but I was always struck by her ability to continually strive for change and justice. Sarah refused to give up and this quality kept her working and striving for more—even under difficult circumstances. Sarah focused on what she could control in her classroom and school community. She found creative ways to share her ESL expertise with her colleagues, she worked to make the time she spent with her students meaningful (both academically and culturally), and when she saw her students suffering, she tried to do something. She seemed to go above and beyond the accomplishments of most first year teachers. Either from within the system or on the edges of the system, her actions were very often pursuing change for her marginalized students, herself, and her colleagues. She lived up to her teacher education program’s unofficial motto of survive and subvert.

In some ways, it could be interpreted that Sarah’s journey toward culturally responsive pedagogy was a survival moment—something she came to when all else failed. In some ways, this was the case. She was pushed toward a certain practice in response to the demands of her students. However, her ability to respond to her students with culturally responsive teaching even while struggling against the larger societal and institutional structures, speaks volumes to her political and ideological clarity and care. Before teaching she understood the value of culturally responsive practice on an intellectual level, but by the end of the year, her understanding of this pedagogy grew deeper and more urgent. The combination of teaching and learning as well as theory and practice, came together to solidify her intense commitment to and belief of a school classroom as a site of change and agency.
A final example of her commitment to her students and her embodiment of a theory of change came at the very end of the school year. The final days were bittersweet. She had continued teaching the way she had learned to teach that year, but had decided to transfer to another school system the following year. Her final act of responsiveness came in the form of an ESL yearbook. Sarah said, “I decided to make class yearbooks because when I looked at the school’s yearbook, that costs 35 dollars, I realized that half of my students were not represented at all… like not even having the class picture in there let alone anywhere else. They were this invisible, missing piece in the yearbook.” She was angry and upset by this, but not all that surprised. Like she had done all year long, she found a way to make the four walls of her classroom a place where her students were not invisible or marginalized. In the space they had created together, they were important and they all had something to contribute. So she decided to do these books for them. It was a little gesture, but this small act of resistance said it all.
Chapter Six:
Social Movements, Authentic Relationships, and Crossing Borders

The last chapter described Sarah’s uphill journey toward culturally responsive pedagogy and practice in her classroom as well as the role that societal and institutional structures play in the lives of students and their teachers. Her commitment to her school, classroom, and practice was challenged on a daily basis, but through sheer determination, she found meaningful ways to put theory into practice in order to work for change. Within a few short hours each day, she found a way to build toward trusting relationships with her students and among her students. In addition, even as a novice teacher, she worked to share her understandings of her students with more experienced mainstream teachers and administrators. She worked within the limits of her context and found small openings in the structures that surrounded her. Her story illustrates the complex interactions between political and ideological clarity and care and the very real situations that put such beliefs to the test.

This chapter continues Sarah’s compelling story and highlights how the world outside of the classroom finds its way into schools and how Sarah used this opportunity to bring her culturally responsive teaching to the next level. In addition, this chapter returns to Sarah’s 6th grade class to describe how she managed to not only provide culturally responsive pedagogy, but used timely world and local events to foster a classroom culture of exchange and respect between students from very different backgrounds. These complex interactions between the larger political and social realm and schools, generate interesting questions about the role of
Beyond Classroom Practices—Social Movements and Authentic Classroom Relationships

Levinson and Holland (1996) point out how theorists such as Wexler (1992) and Weis (1990) “demonstrate the way in which the social identities constructed in schools are bound up with social movements and political-economic restructuring in the broader regional scene” (p. 12). This interaction of social movements and larger political forces and their role in the classroom became apparent in April for Sarah and her 6th and 8th grade classes. The country was in the middle of a large debate surrounding issues of undocumented immigrant rights. Rallies were occurring around the country and the local Latino community was planning a number of events and marches.

Taking culturally responsive teaching to the next level. On the Friday before the scheduled nation-wide student walk-out, protests, and rallies, Sarah brought her 8th graders to the library to read a Newsweek article on the issues of immigration and undocumented workers. This started a discussion about the upcoming events and the students asked Sarah if they could make flyers to advertise the local marches. Sarah said to me, describing the day’s events, “So I’m thinking great. We’ve read and discussed this article and now they are going to write and create these flyers to hand out talking intelligently about these issues. They were doing a great job and when class ended, I was feeling really good.”
She assumed they were going to hand the flyers out in their neighborhoods, but didn’t give them any explicit directions. Later that day, one of her students found her and told her that they were getting in trouble for the flyers. He had not been caught, but the two 8th grade girls were both in the break room because students were not allowed to distribute flyers of any kind in the school. Sarah became worried and her first thought was, “I am going to get fired for this.” She went to her mentor teacher for advice, but he didn’t want to get involved. He told her it was way too dangerous and political. He said he had friends who had been fired for student protests and told her that she might get fired for this.

Feeling panicked, she went to explain the situation to the assistant principal. On her way to the office, she was asked by the break room teacher to write a referral slip on her students. She refused because as she said, “I was the one that assigned the flyers and helped them print them off.” Instead, she went to find an administrator. When she described the lesson to the vice principal, he told her that it sounded like a really engaging and meaningful lesson and he didn’t want anyone to get in trouble for it. She was grateful. He said the school was encouraging students to attend school on Monday, but was not going to make a point out of it if students chose to stay home or to go to the marches. He made sure she understood the rule regarding the distribution of flyers and then helped her get her students out of the break room and back in class.

She was relieved and felt good about the administration’s support. She wanted her kids to go to the marches and was encouraging this, but realized she could have gotten herself and her students into a lot of trouble. Even though the administration was supportive, they asked Sarah to get on the intercom at the end of the day to explain the rallies and then say, “We expect all students to be at school on Monday.” She felt like a hypocrite, but she
was glad to still have a job and to have been able to protect her students. Though she didn’t know it at the time, Sarah had taken her culturally responsive teaching to the next level. She was not only teaching her students (and learning from her students) about issues of social justice, she was also putting her job on the line to encourage their participation in political and social movements.

*Finding spaces for relations.* I have focused on Sarah’s practice in her 8th grade classroom because data from that class revealed so many patterns related to the impact of social and institutional structures and they ways in which they challenge the use of culturally responsive pedagogy for many teachers of linguistically diverse students. However, I want to be clear that she was also working to provide student-centered, culturally responsive, and meaningful pedagogy for her 6th graders throughout the year. Being able to provide culturally relevant lesson to a group as diverse as her 6th grade class took a different approach. She worked to bring all of the students’ backgrounds into the classroom as much as possible to help connect them to the curriculum, but she also provided opportunities for exchange. While her focus was on teaching her 6th graders English and academic content, she recognized the importance of fostering cross cultural conversations. During a December interview, she said, “Today some of the 6th graders weren’t doing work at all because they were learning Spanish from R and that isn’t going to help them academically, but it definitely helps the climate of the classroom. They were getting something out of it.”

Sarah used the national and local current events surrounding immigration to create a lesson that highlighted the differences between her Latino, Korean, and Burmese 6th graders, but in doing so, she also created a dialogue and new perspective for her students. My fieldnotes from the Tuesday after the protests describe how she accomplished this:
S started her 6th grade class by asking them to define immigration. They came up with, “To move from one country to live in another.” Then S asked them to define, *right*. First they said, “left/right.” Then they came up with, “wrong/right.” Finally, R (from El Salvador) came up with examples. He said, “Right to work, right to healthcare, right to drive a car, right to go to school.” Then from his examples, S asked them to define this kind of right. M (from Mexico) came up with the definition, “To have the ability or permission to do something” (she said this in Spanish). Then L (from Korea) asked, “Why are we talking about immigration and rights at the same time?” Another Korean student said, “Because it is opposite/contrast?” The student from El Salvador said, “The rights of immigrants.” Then S had them define passport. They said, “A paper that gives permission to leave and enter a country.” J (from Korea) said, “Without papers some people don’t have certain rights.” Then the U (from Burma) said, “You need permission to immigrate. You need a passport and papers.” The student from El Salvador said, “It is important for all people to have rights even if they don’t have papers.” M said, “All of us… no matter where we come from deserve to have the same rights.” S said some people believe all immigrants should have the same rights… to medical care for instance. L (from Korea) said, “No… not my horrible sister. She doesn’t deserve rights.” The class laughed. Then S shifted the conversation to talking about the right to work and R (from El Salvador) began talking about construction and working in the fields. He said, “Those workers deserve rights.”

They have this whole, very engaged conversation and she had them write down the definitions and then she gave them a quiz. They had to define the terms and come up with an example (immigration, rights, passport). R and M could do this immediately, but the Burmese and Korean students struggled with the quiz (A switch in class dynamics—usually it is the Latino students who need extra scaffolding because they are more recent immigrants). So S re-taught the vocabulary for those students and had R and M helped out. After she was sure they understood the vocabulary and concepts, she handed out a newspaper article about yesterday’s march in a nearby local town along with questions (How many attended, why held, 3 slogans from posters, what did this person say, this other person, what percentage of North Carolinians think immigration is an important issue, what percentage think illegal immigration is bad/good for NC?) All of the students worked together and this time I and M were the experts.

Notes to self:
What was particularly interesting (and not too surprising) was that the Korean and Burmese students had no idea that the marches were happening. They had a very limited understanding of immigration issues, but the Latino students knew all of this. She scaffolded the Korean and Burmese students well and taught them about something very new and important. At the same time, she provided a very relevant lesson for R and M… without creating animosity between the groups and without anyone having to make their legal status public.
Levinson and Holland write, “Schools create a space for the formation of relations among people of different classes, genders, castes, ethnic, and age groups which would be unlikely in other sites. Such relations may come to reconfigure previous alliances, allegiances, and sympathies” (1996, p. 21-22). I was moved as I watched her 6th graders learn from one another and build these alliances and sympathies within Sarah’s class. These students cared for each other and tried to understand and learn from each other’s different experiences. Sarah was directly responsible for fostering this kind of classroom climate. The immigration lesson was a striking example of the different realities of her students and her ability to bridge those gaps through dialogue and culturally responsive pedagogy.

Complications. Even with the success Sarah found with her 6th graders, the story of Sarah and her 8th graders was never without complications. All of her good work bringing the important and relevant issues surrounding immigration into the classroom would once again be derailed. After her great class with the 6th graders, she began her 8th grade class by providing an opportunity for those who attended an event to share their experiences. Y and J had gone to two marches, one student had skipped school and didn’t attend the protests, and the other three had attended school the previous day. They listened intently to Y and J who colorfully described their stories of the protests. The class had a really great discussion for 20 minutes and then things got complicated:

A asked S if she went to a march and she said that she hadn’t. He asked why not and she said, “Well, I live far away and I couldn’t get there in time from my home.” He said, “The march started at 4 but it went until 7, so you could have left work and got there in time.” She said, “Yeah but I really needed to get home.” He asked, “What did you have to get home for?” She responded that she had to make dinner. He kept pushing her and it became clear that she didn’t have a really good reason for not being there and he called her on it. She kept making excuses and at that point the tone shifted and things started to break down. I cannot be sure that it was really cause and effect, but the class got rowdy and disrespectful and she said to them, “I’m spending time on this because I know you are interested and that it affects your lives.
I’m trying to come up with this material to use to get you to do some learning and you can’t even do this when it is about something you care about.” And that was it. They got the message. She was just a teacher trying to teach. In their eyes, she didn’t really care about the marches or the plight of undocumented immigrants. The rest of the class was a mess and the bell rang and they tore out of the classroom.

Having worked with Sarah for over two years, I strongly believe that she did and does, in fact, care deeply about the rights of undocumented immigrants. I also believe that if she had made the effort to attend a rally, to join her students in solidarity outside of the classroom, she could have shown them just how much she authentically cared for them (Valenzuela, 1999). With students who have been taught not to trust their teachers through years of struggle and marginalization, teachers often have to do more to foster and maintain a minimal level of trust. Sarah did care for her students, but she had to prove it on a daily basis due to her 8th graders’ previous experiences with other teachers and authority figures. They were quick to call her buena gente, but they were also constantly looking for evidence of her trustworthiness or lack thereof. This put Sarah into a situation that was at times exhausting and frustrating, but even after setbacks, she always returned to rebuild those caring and trusting relationships over and over again.

This is the challenge of teaching. By the end of the year, Sarah was doing everything possible in terms of practice and pedagogy. Her lessons were very often, “relevant, rigorous, and revolutionary” (Gay, 2000). She had learned how to capture her 8th graders attention and how to use their interests and backgrounds to teach them the academic language and content they needed to be successful in school. All of her 8th graders who took the EOGs (her newcomer was not required to take the exam) passed by the end of the year. Most passed on the first try. While this was not the direct result of Sarah’s work alone, she did play a major role in their academic accomplishments. She also provided them with a space in the day.
where they knew that their language and culture would be valued. By the end of the year, thanks to her demanding 8th graders and her own determination, Sarah had been pushed to use her political and ideological clarity and care to carve out a space in between the structures of school and society to practice the kind of teaching all kids deserve—relevant and validating pedagogy.

She accomplished all of this within the four walls of her classroom and school. She did all of this while living 45 minutes away from her students in a middle-class suburb. This is her great achievement and amazing triumph. This is also her greatest tragedy. Once again, political and ideological clarity and care were not enough when her student looked her in the eye and asked, “Why weren’t you there?” I think he wanted to know why she wasn’t out there, outside of their classroom in the real world with them. This is the lesson he taught her. This is the lesson he taught me. Pedagogical knowledge and practice can do a great deal for kids within the classroom, but to really achieve authentically situated, culturally responsive and caring pedagogy, teachers have to go beyond the school grounds.

I deeply regret not having invited Sarah to come to the protest with me. I wish one of her students or another teacher had asked her to go with them. This was a missed opportunity for Sarah to learn from and with her students and their community—not from a book or article, but through real world experience and relation and solidarity with her kids (Howard, 1999). Was she a successful first year ESL teacher? Without a doubt. Would her practice have benefited from spending more time in the lives and communities of her students? Absolutely. I think it is precisely because Sarah was so successful in her classroom that I expected even more from her. I’m not sure if this is fair. Fair or not, when her student so powerfully raised this issue in that moment, I felt obligated to respond. I could
no longer ignore the fact that while funds of knowledge originally held a central role in the conceptualization of this study, it had all but disappeared by the end of the year. With this push from one of Sarah’s students, I was determined to explore this invisible narrative thread. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) point out, narrative inquiry must pay attention to the stories told as well as those untold and hidden just under the surface.

_Beyond the Classroom Walls—Toward Funds of Knowledge_

Ultimately, this study encountered and explored the tensions between language and culture, and theory and practice. Sarah and her students taught me that pedagogical knowledge and practice can be powerful within the classroom and I celebrate their accomplishments. At the same time, I believe that to really achieve authentically situated, culturally responsive and caring pedagogy, teachers have to go beyond the school grounds. While this study focused on culturally responsive teaching, I hoped to help the new teachers conduct a specific kind of ethnographically-based home visit as well. It is the absence of this theoretical and practical manifestation of critical multicultural education that leads to a variety of questions and thoughts for teacher education and future research. While this study reveals a number of valuable lessons, I still wonder what would have happened if Sarah had been able to take that step from her role as a teacher toward another identity as an ethnographer and learner. I still wonder why it was so difficult for the teachers to cross that border into the homes, lives, and communities of their students.

_Defining funds of knowledge._ Funds of knowledge approaches originated in the context of the southwest as a response to the needs of Mexican immigrant and Mexican-American students. High Latino drop-out rates and other indicators prompted researchers to
explore new ways to think about students’ cultural and linguistic knowledge as strengths instead of deficits. Moll et al (1992) define funds of knowledge as “the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (p. 133). These scholars argue that when teachers shed their role of teacher and expert and instead take on a new role as learner, they can come to know their students and the families of their students in new and distinct ways. With this new knowledge, they can begin to see that the households of their students contain rich cultural and cognitive resources and that these resources can and should be used in their classroom in order to provide culturally responsive and meaningful lessons that tap students’ prior knowledge (Moll et al., 1992; Gonzalez et al., 2002, 2005).

In order for teachers to gain this kind of knowledge about the households and social networks of their students, teachers must be willing to go into the homes and communities of their students to observe and learn not simply about, but from and with their students and the families of their students (Howard, 1999). Most of the literature on funds of knowledge involves teachers collaborating with ethnographers and conducting ethnographic fieldwork in the homes and communities of their students. These teachers must learn ethnographic methods as well as reflexivity (Moll et al., 1992; Gonzalez et al., 2002, 2005). Many teachers claim to care for their students, but unless they care enough to attempt to learn, understand, and know their students’ political, historical, and personal situations—their funds of knowledge—then their caring is an aesthetic and colorblind theory that lacks the ethics of an authentic, politically situated, and culturally responsive caring theory that their student need and deserve (Gay, 2000; Thompson, 1998; Valenzuela, 1999).
Finding a place to cross. With all of the demands placed on today’s teachers, funds of knowledge can seem like another unreasonable demand made of teachers. What I have learned through my own experience going into the homes of my students as a learner, was that I became a better teacher and a better person having crossed that border. It was worth the extra time, and ultimately, it made my job easier. I understood my students better and could focus my curriculum on their interests and prior knowledge. Discipline became easier as my students knew I could call or visit their homes at anytime and would receive a warm reception. More than anything, my students and their families grew to trust me and the school and this made both teaching and learning more effective.

However, what I have come to see through this research is that the same structures that foster or impede certain pedagogies in the classroom also influence practices outside of the school. I worked in a school that was determined to build trusting relationships both inside and outside of the school building. PTA meetings and parent-teacher conferences were often held at community centers in order to give parents a more neutral and convenient ground to enter into dialogue with school personnel. A group of parents, community leaders, and teachers met for retreats to talk about ways to build bridges between the school and the community. As the school’s main interpreter, I became a trusted voice for Latino parents and was frequently invited into the homes of my students as well as to a variety of community events. Even within this climate, I still found it difficult to step outside of the safety of my classroom, but with these supports, I did so and my practice was better for it.

I worked to support this kind of interaction with the four ESL teachers for the duration of the study. I offered to set up visits, to interpret, to guide them out of the comfort zone of the school—a border we demand students and parents cross everyday. However, my
supports were not sufficient to counter the structures that kept Sarah and the other 3 ESL teachers in their classrooms. The context of this school system was significantly different from that of my teaching experience. The norms of parent involvement in these schools serving a university community looked nothing like the norms I encountered working with a more rural, working class population in the mountains. Many parents in Sarah’s school did not need to be invited into the classroom. They were a constant, often overbearing presence within the school. I heard a few teachers claim that the university parents’ constant presence was one of the biggest challenges of their jobs. This kind of climate did not consider the benefits in actively pursuing a dialogue with the community nor did it pay attention to the parents who were not present in school.

It is important to note here the role that language and culture play in these border crossings. My working command of the Spanish language gave me easier access to the homes of my Spanish-speaking students. While I do not believe proficiency in the home language is necessary (it would be impossible to learn all of the languages represented in the classrooms in this study), it certainly removes a significant barrier. Knowledge of a language also gives a certain perspective and greater understanding of a culture. At the same time, if a teacher knows very little about the cultural background of his or her students, then I see an even greater urgency for the kind of learning from and with families through an extended engagement with the “other” (Howard, 1999). Even though Sarah had never lived abroad, she could effectively communicate in Spanish. Language was not the barrier that kept her in her classroom.

So what got in the way? As a first year teacher working in a school without a culture of home/school connections, Sarah had no one modeling this kind of practice. The school
hosted a variety of events designed to bring parents into the school, but the administration did not actively support or encourage home visits. This also meant that families were not accustomed to American teachers’ involvement in their homes and lives and therefore, did not initiate these relationships either. In addition, Sarah was overwhelmed by and focused on surviving, teaching, and making it through the day. She spent a great deal of her school day feeling marginalized and frustrated and this did not foster the frame of mind needed to extend oneself further.

It is important to note that Sarah wanted to do these visits. She felt guilty for failing to do so. I believe that she will, as she gains more confidence and experience as an educator, cross these borders and reach her fullest potential as a politically situated, culturally responsive teacher. At the same time, I believe that as a researcher guided by political and ideological clarity and care, it is just as important to consider what it means to make such a prescriptive critique. On the one hand, I believe strongly in funds of knowledge and draw my assessment of Sarah’s practice from her student’s own critique of his teacher. On the other hand, I saw the way Sarah moved within the school as a creative and often effective agent for change under very difficult circumstances as a first year ESL teacher. What became important was that instead of simply raising these issues and walking away, I wanted to remain true to my priority of helping teachers and their students. I wanted and needed to continue to learn from and with Sarah through dialogue just as she wanted and needed to do the same with her students.
Member Checking and Continuing the Dialogue

Sarah was not just the focal participant in this study, she also helped during the writing process. I had a few conversations with her regarding the general direction of the dissertation’s analysis before writing and then asked her to read early drafts of the analysis chapters. Her feedback was hugely important and pushed me to more fully consider the critique from her perspective and from the perspective of teachers in general. When I wrote this chapter, I was very concerned that I might be interpreted as just another researcher critiquing a teacher. This tension kept me returning to Clandinin and Connelly who write, “We are not merely objective inquirers, people on the high road, who study a world lesser in quality than our moral temperament would have it, people who study a world we did not help create. On the contrary, we are complicit in the world we study. Being in this world, we need to remake ourselves as well as offer up research understandings that could lead to a better world” (2000, p. 61). This quote kept me questioning myself and my critiques as well as bolstered my desire to find a way to better understand funds of knowledge in order to make schools better places for culturally and linguistically diverse kids.

Sarah’s general feedback on the chapters was very positive. She felt that I had done a good job capturing their experiences that first year. She said, “I was surprised by just how much you got and how much you really understood us.” She said it was in fact so real that it was hard to read, “It really brought me back to that year.” At the same time, she was troubled by the critique. I became worried when I didn’t hear from her for several weeks after sending the chapter. I knew it would be hard to read and I gave her some space to process it before getting back in touch to try to enter into a dialogue. As always, Sarah’s
intelligence and ability to reflect on her practice gave me valuable feedback on these kinds of
tensions found in education and educational research. In her email response she wrote:

To be honest, I also haven't responded yet because I needed some time to
think about what you wrote. I did get pretty upset the day I read the chapter (it
was a very rough day and I probably shouldn't have chosen that day to read it
either). I appreciated the point you were trying to make, in theory, but that
combined with the week I'd had (where I felt like I was trying to do
everything under the sun and it still wasn't enough) made me feel like trying
to be an exemplary, truly caring teacher is futile, because no matter how much
you do, it won't be enough.

Again, I know that's not your intent, but that was how I felt at the time, and
I've been trying to wrestle with things in my head ever since so I would know
what to tell you. The term 'cognitive dissonance' comes to mind. Basically I've
been trying to decide which ideas(s) to accept: what I know and feel from my
teaching experience vs. the theoretical point you're making (which might
mean accepting that I'm doing things wrong, which is hard). Some questions
I've had for myself:

* Does accepting this concept mean that I haven't done as much as I should
  have as a teacher?

* Could I have done more during that first year? Could I be doing more now?

* Quantifiably, how much more of a difference would those extra actions
  make?

* Healthwise, sanity-wise, safety-wise, emotion-wise, can I actually cope with
doing more for my students right now (home visits, etc.)?

* As a teacher, what is the breakdown between 9-5 job and compassionate,
  committed individual? Where does the teacher leave off and the individual
  begin? (As I'm still trying to work this out) how does a committed teacher
  have a personal life?

So, this might not be written out very clearly as I had intended (and had been
putting off), but these are the main ideas I've been wrestling with. Maybe it
would be quicker and clearer if we talked on the phone or met in person
sometime this week.

I just want to reiterate, I appreciate your writing and your work for ESL
teachers and the points you are making, which are valid. Not upset with *you*
at all! I'm just trying to reconcile these ideas with my teaching life and myself.
Thanks for being persistent and let me know if you'd like to talk.

A few days later, she wrote:

Like you said, it may not be fair, but it's definitely *true* and needs to be said. *Should* it be fair? How much of it should fall on the individual teacher's shoulders and how much of it should be implemented system-wide? And would the system-wide implementation negate the sincerity of the care?

After I read the chapter and had all this mental distress about my role as a teacher, etc., I looked up "double bind" from my anthropology days. It might be worth considering the double bind in terms of care and the lengths a teacher should go to in order to "genuinely" care about her students. By saying "You [the teacher] must *care* actively [home visit, protest, etc.] about your students", it creates a strange logic. On the one hand, it's commanding the teacher to care, which negates the sincerity. On the other hand, if the teacher does not do x visits, x phone calls, x above-and-beyond actions, does that mean that she *doesn't* truly care? Or are there different degrees/different ways of caring? Or is that just a cop-out for an overworked teacher?

I'm not even sure if these questions are just my own issues, or if they have some bearing on your dissertation. I hope it gives you some good ideas though. Could we meet Friday at 3:30?

When I met with her that Friday, I thanked her for her perspective and expressed my desire to get it right. I told her I wanted to find a way to include her thoughtful and important questions to the critique because understanding these issues from the perspective of a teacher is the only way to figure out how to move forward. She walked me through her feedback on the chapters and we discussed the dilemma. We were two committed educators trying to balance the very real needs of students and the very real demands put on teachers today. I wish I could say we came up with a good answer to these questions, but of course we did not. What we did do was re-enter a dialogue we had been engaged in for over three years—one that will continue for years to come. I told Sarah that as long as we were both learning from one another, then the critique was serving its purpose. Not to condemn a teacher or a
researcher, but to challenge educators to learn from and with each other and from our students. I thanked her for pushing and educating me, but I don’t think I will ever be able to fully communicate my gratitude for her participation in this journey.

While this study leaves me with a great deal of hope and information to improve the education of future teachers, I am also left grappling with the questions raised by the difficulty putting this amazing theoretical approach into practice. My work will be to find ways to help future teachers navigate both home and school communities and cultures—and ultimately, to bridge the gaps that separate, marginalize, and isolate. As long as I surround myself with teachers like Sarah, who think and push and work for change everyday, I will consider myself lucky.
Chapter Seven:
Connections and Contributions

Sarah’s story, in many ways, represents the experiences of the other ESL teachers in the study. Like the other teachers, she was prepared, capable, and motivated to work with students from a variety of linguistic, cultural, academic, and economic backgrounds. Unlike many first year teachers described in the literature, she and the other ESL teachers saw the diversity within their classrooms and schools as rich assets. They approached their work from a student-centered philosophy and strived to connect their curriculum to the lives, interests, and needs of their students. These four ESL teachers were well equipped to handle the many (and often changing) demands of their jobs and saw themselves as ESL experts. At the same time, as novice teachers, they were all challenged by planning, assessment, and to a certain extent, lack of resources. In addition, all four teachers found it difficult to navigate the unique and often marginalized spaces occupied by ESL students and their teachers. This situation was often highlighted and exacerbated by the ineffective and poorly implemented practice of collaboration in their schools. The topics they discussed and worked through during the new teacher support group meetings (marginalization, relationships with teachers, the unique context of ESL, and collaboration) taught me a great deal about their unique position as marginalized experts.

At the same time, Sarah’s narrative, in important ways, contrasts with the stories of the other three ESL teachers. Her context provided her with a challenge the other four did not experience. The combination of her political and ideological clarity and care, the
demands of her 8th grade Latino students, and the larger institutional and societal structures, pushed her toward and pulled her from culturally responsive pedagogy in a way unparalleled by the other four teachers. In the end, Sarah reached a level of pedagogy and culturally responsive practice within her school and classroom that were a testament to her dedication, perseverance, and skill as an educator. She and her students found a small space between the economic and racist structures of society and schooling and used their agency to carve out a validating and meaningful learning environment. However, as the previous chapter shows, her sometimes exceptional classroom practice was limited to the boundaries of the school building. Her advocacy and connection with the students resided within the four walls of her classroom and through her curriculum.

During the process of writing this dissertation, I came to understand what Coble (2006) and Gitlin (1990) pointed out in their work—that an individual teacher’s beliefs or personal character alone cannot bear the entire burden of reform movements. Acknowledging the larger societal, economic, social, and institutional structures, as well as understanding the complex and interactive nature of schooling, are of critical importance. If we are to help new teachers navigate and implement educational reform, larger structural, contextual, and relational factors must be included in the analysis. It is my hope that this work has successfully captured these relationships between beliefs, practice, and larger structures of schools and society. Without this kind of ethical, relational, and feminist orientation to the field of educational research, we will do more harm than good in our attempts to bring change to our nation’s public schools.

The findings of this study have made a number of contributions to the field that are of particular importance as our schools become more culturally and linguistically diverse. This
research encountered and explored the tensions between language and culture, as well as theory and practice. These are issues that go beyond the ESL classroom. This conclusion chapter will first discuss the theoretical and methodological implications revealed through this work. Next, it will reiterate the study’s contribution to the literature, including the first year teacher literature and new teacher development. Finally, implications for teacher education and future research are presented with a case that the lessons of this study must move beyond the unique position of ESL teachers to address all teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse youth and beyond the four walls of a teacher’s classroom.

**Theory and Practice**

From a theoretical standpoint, it was important to complicate the conceptual framework of political and ideological clarity and care in order to account for the role structures played in the lives of Sarah and her students. More importantly, acknowledging the way Sarah’s students, in relation with their teacher and the larger school and societal structures, used their collective power to push their teacher toward culturally responsive pedagogy holds theoretical implications. Sarah had, to a certain extent, the political and ideological clarity and care I believed necessary to implement relevant and responsive practices in the classroom. What I failed to see, before entering the field, were the ways these beliefs and knowledge would interact with the very real context of schooling.

While social and cultural reproduction theory left very little room for personal characteristics, beliefs, or agency, other educational theories, such as political and ideological clarity, often place too much emphasis on the personal characteristics of individual teachers alone. While both of these oversights are problematic, an over-emphasis on the beliefs of
individual teachers is even more damaging when considering novice teachers who are most vulnerable to the bureaucracies and structures of schooling. At the same time, in focusing too much attention on the individual teacher, researchers fail to value the significant role relationships play, as well as the power of student voices and actions. In this study, political and ideological clarity and care was resituated and reconceptualized within the complex and dynamic structures of schools and society and in relation with students who actively resisted and responded to their marginalized status as ESL students and as undocumented immigrants.

Another theoretical aspect of this dissertation emerged from the tension between theory and practice. As the large body of literature on multicultural education and critical multicultural education illustrate, there is some consensus regarding multicultural education’s goals and theoretical framings, but a gap remains between theory and practice in classrooms (Banks, 2004; Gay, 2004). Sarah’s story illustrates these complex interactions as well as the difficulty of putting educational theory into practice. In some ways, Sarah’s implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy shows the possibility these theories hold, as well as the need for such practice in today’s diverse and dynamic classrooms. At the same time, it shows the difficulty of producing such practice within the constraints of educational institutions. Her narrative provides insight into the skills and knowledge, as well as beliefs and contextual support necessary to achieve the reform championed by critical multicultural education. Sarah’s journey toward culturally responsive teaching was not straightforward and linear. It was messy, incomplete, and a work in progress. She articulated her beliefs and knowledge and she acted in relation with her students and her context. Her experience and voice puts a human face on these abstract concepts.
These findings hold both theoretical implications as well as practical lessons that need to be addressed in teacher education programs. In addition, these findings call for continued support for novice teachers into their first year of teaching and beyond. Most importantly, the study’s focus on one teacher’s own understanding and very real enactment of culturally responsive teaching in the ESL context is a unique contribution to educational theory, practice, and methodology. If the voices of teachers who work with culturally and linguistically diverse youth continue to be left out of these academic discussions, we will do a great disservice to both teachers and the growing numbers of English language learners in their classrooms.

Methodological Commitments and Contributions

While political and ideological clarity and care informed every aspect of this study, upon closer inspection, I realized how significantly it guided my methodological approach. Clandinin and Connelly write, “We are not merely objective inquirers, people on the high road, who study a world lesser in quality than our moral temperament would have it, people who study a world we did not help create. On the contrary, we are complicit in the world we study. Being in this world, we need to remake ourselves as well as offer up research understandings that could lead to a better world” (2000, p. 61). My commitment to political and ideological clarity pushes me to interrogate my own assumptions, beliefs, and actions— as a teacher, researcher, and woman. It also drives my own personal commitment to social justice and my belief that teachers and researchers can help create a better world. In addition, embracing a politically situated, culturally responsive caring theory requires that I engage in collaborative research relationships and seek reciprocity in my work as a researcher.
While I believe reciprocity in research is an important methodological consideration in any educational context, it was of particular interest during this study of first year teachers. As someone who helped prepare these four teachers, I was committed to their education as they began their teaching careers. I knew I wanted to find a way to contribute to their classrooms as I learned from them. Narrative inquiry pushes the researcher to seek reciprocity in the classroom. As an ESL teacher returning to the classroom as a researcher, it was important to negotiate meaningful ways to participate in the classroom community. While my participation looked different in each of the four contexts, my commitment to relationships and reciprocity remained a constant priority. I never forgot my responsibility as a researcher, but I also understood that my identity as a teacher was an asset to the first year teachers, their students, and ultimately, the study.

Most new teachers find that the support they received during their teacher education program ends upon graduation. The new teacher support group in this study was created to provide these novice teachers with continued support after graduation. There was continuity in that we all shared a common history and knowledge base coming from the same program (they were students, I was a teaching assistant working in their program). I could provide resources and encouragement and they were able to comfort, challenge, and commiserate with one another, as well as teach each other. Methodologically, these meetings provided significant data as focus groups, but more importantly, they allowed me and the study to give back to these four educators. A surprising and important methodological implication was that in listening to the teachers share with each other the stories of their teaching lives, they played a significant role in the direction and focus of this study. This kind of flexibility and
responsiveness allowed me to adjust the study in order to uncover the most compelling and important story and provide the reciprocity and collaboration I value as a researcher.

Filling Gaps and Making Connections

A recent report of the American Educational Research Association on research and teacher education, as well as other recent studies, has pointed out the enormous gap in research on the preparation of teachers working with English language learners (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Wainer, 2004, Zeichner, 2005). The report states that “almost no research has been conducted on this aspect of diversity in teacher education” (Zeichner, 2005, p. 747). While this study makes a number of important contributions, helping to fill this gap is critical for both ESL and mainstream teachers as well as teacher educators who are concerned with preparing teachers for culturally and linguistically diverse youth—the “new mainstream” (Villalva, 2008). It is an enormous disservice to the field and to teachers, schools, and communities if we fail to prepare teachers for the realities of their future classrooms. While this study attempts to fill this hole in the research agenda, there is a great deal of future work to be done in this area.

In addition to this gap in the teacher education literature, this study contributes to other research agendas as well. Multicultural education literature has been instrumental in addressing issues of diversity in schools but has rarely included the voices of English language learners or their teachers. The literatures on second language acquisition and ESL, in focusing too closely on language, have often failed to communicate effectively with other disciplines in educational theory and practice. The first year teacher literature, that greatly informs teacher education, has generally failed to examine language and culture in those
novice teachers’ classrooms. One important goal of the study was to fill these significant gaps in the literatures and to tie these orientations and disciplines together to create a space for dialogue. This study’s ability to simultaneously address issues of language, culture, beliefs, educational relationships, reproduction theory, multicultural theory, and practice into a coherent argument, is a step in the right direction.

In addition, the study’s focus on ESL teachers provides critical information regarding the front line of teachers who receive immigrant students in many of today’s schools. Understanding the unique, often marginalized position ESL teachers and their students occupy is an important first step in better preparing future ESL teachers for the complex and changing demands of their work. This is especially important in order to help these new ESL teachers support culturally and linguistically diverse students through culturally responsive teaching that validates and encourages the maintenance of the home languages and cultures of their students. At the same time, this study’s contribution goes beyond the ESL classroom and holds important implications for future mainstream teachers who will very likely teach English language learners and collaborate with ESL teachers in their educational careers.

The data on collaboration in this study provide new information about this common practice that is often poorly implemented and has not been adequately researched. Without training, administrative support, and thoughtful implementation, collaboration in the ESL context simply marginalizes both ESL teachers and their students. While all four of the ESL teachers in this study worked in different schools, they all found it difficult to collaborate effectively with mainstream teachers. Since very little research has been conducted on collaboration in the ESL context, this study makes a clear case for future research in this area of practice. The first year status of the ESL teachers in the study complicated this aspect of
the research and it would be important to explore the experiences of more experienced ESL teachers as well as mainstream teachers who have experience co-teaching and collaborating in other contexts. More than anything, it is imperative to prepare future ESL and mainstream teachers to work together with English language learners.

**Implications for Teachers of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Youth**

The lessons of this study provide new knowledge in terms of educational theory, methodological considerations, and filling gaps in the literature. However, the passion that drove this study has been my commitment to the education of preservice teachers and the support of new teachers who are working with culturally and linguistically diverse youth. In order to inform these aspects of teacher education, this study has both examined the first year of ESL teachers and explored the benefits of a new teacher support group. Establishing the unique position, skills, and challenges of first year ESL teachers informs approaches to methods of teaching ESL coursework, as well as other necessary coursework and experiences for future ESL teachers. In addition, I believe the contributions to teacher education move beyond the unique position of ESL teachers to address all teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse youth. Finally, as the lessons of this study revealed, the education of future teachers must continue beyond graduation from a teacher education program, and the education of culturally and linguistically diverse students must move beyond the four walls of a teacher’s classroom.

*Teacher education for ESL teachers.* Most ESL teacher education programs provide preservice ESL teachers with knowledge of second language acquisition theory and ESL methods, but this limited focus on language and methods does not prepare future ESL
teachers to navigate the unique demands of their job, such as advocating for equitable
treatment of ESL students in the mainstream classroom, or acting as a liaison between the
families of their students and the school community (Ovando et al, 2006). The four ESL
teachers who participated in this study had access to an extensive teacher education program
that provided significantly more knowledge than language acquisition and teaching
methodology. They were well versed in multicultural education theory, social foundations of
education, the practice of reflection, benefits of bilingualism, collaboration, and the idea that
they could and should, “survive and subvert.” In many ways, they were very well prepared
for their first year of teaching.

However, this study revealed that learning to plan a curriculum that balances the
academic content of the mainstream classroom with the acquisition of English was difficult.
Assessment of English proficiency and academic backgrounds to both inform and evaluate
instruction proved to be challenging. Collaborating with mainstream teachers did little for
the academic progress of ESL students or the low status of these students and their ESL
teachers in the school community. Knowledge and beliefs about the importance of culturally
responsive teaching did not provide the skills or tools required to implement this theory into
actual classroom practice. Even with their excellent preparation, these teachers had to
struggle to develop a great deal of knowledge and skills during their first year. In the case of
culturally responsive teaching, even though they all voiced a commitment to the theory, three
of the four did not pursue putting this theory into practice.

As I pursue a career in ESL teacher education, I take a number of lessons from this
study that I will both pursue in my own teacher education classroom and research agenda.
First, ESL teacher education coursework and teaching experiences need to help preservice
ESL teachers understand the unique position and spaces occupied by ESL teachers and their students. I believed this had been accomplished through both coursework and student-teaching, but three of the four first year teachers seemed unprepared for the extent of marginalization they experienced during their first year of teaching. It seems that even more explicit teaching around these issues as well as conversations with current first or second year ESL teachers could help. Understanding how the marginalized status of their future students will effect their own position and perspective as teachers in a larger school community will help them anticipate and navigate the system more effectively. Knowing of this situation ahead of time can help teachers be better advocates for their students and their ESL programs.

Second, preservice ESL teachers would benefit greatly from more practicum experiences in the mainstream classroom in order to better understand the academic demands of the mainstream curriculum. This could help with planning, assessment, and would give them more confidence when collaborating with mainstream teachers. Unfortunately, the level of experience needed in the mainstream classroom can not be achieved in a one year, stand-alone Master of ESL program. While a new teacher support group with both ESL and mainstream teachers could provide some of the knowledge and skills necessary, a better solution would be the recruitment of mainstream teachers into a Master of ESL program for experienced teachers. These teachers would be best positioned to handle the demands of the ESL and mainstream contexts and curriculum.

Third, future ESL teachers need experience with effective collaboration and co-teaching as well as skills to communicate with experienced teachers and administrators. Fourth, working toward political and ideological clarity and care during the teacher education
program would help future ESL teachers see teaching as the political act it inevitably is. However, this focus would also need to take into account the societal and school structures that make implementing educational reforms such as culturally responsive teaching or collaboration challenging. While Sarah had a well developed political and ideological clarity and care coming out of the program, the other three teachers could have benefited from a deeper understanding of these issues. Subsequent cohorts have engaged in an ethnographic study of an immigrant student and family. These experiences of learning from and with children and families, and follow-up discussions with other preservice teachers, have given students a better grasp of these issues central to teaching ESL. While this dissertation argues that political and ideological clarity and care is not a silver bullet, it does create a foundation, that when supported, can lead to positive changes in schools.

Teacher education for all teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse youth.

Even with the best prepared and experienced ESL teachers, the growing numbers of English language learners and diverse youth in classrooms make language and culture a priority for all future teachers and teacher educators. All educators need opportunities in their teacher education programs to gain political and ideological clarity and care. Not only do mainstream teachers need to have knowledge about second language acquisition theory, the benefits of bilingualism, and ESL teaching methods, they (like ESL teachers) need to understand the larger geopolitical landscape that receives immigrant students in society and in our schools. Finally, future mainstream and ESL teachers need experience collaborating in meaningful and productive ways to bring both ESL students and their teachers out of the marginalized corners of classrooms and into an inclusive and validating class climate.
Support for new teachers into the first year and beyond. As classrooms become more complex and diverse, it is obvious that no teacher education program can adequately provide all of the skills and knowledge necessary for every teaching context. New teachers need opportunities to reflect on their practice with other teachers and teacher educators as they grow and develop as educators. These support group meetings could take a variety of forms, but the crucial ingredient is that these teachers find their own teaching voices and share both their challenges and expertise with one another. As more mainstream teachers are responsible for the education of English language learners in their classrooms, I see an opportunity to bring ESL and mainstream teachers together to learn from and with each other. This kind of supportive collaboration and reflection could have a tremendous impact on teachers’ development and potentially, teacher retention. Both the teachers and their students would benefit from this kind of dialogue occurring in the field of education. This is a worthy research agenda I plan to pursue in the future.
A Case Study of ESL Teachers in Training
Through a Teacher Education Program and First Year of Teaching

1. Project Description:
   (a) Purpose

   The purpose of this research project is to better understand the experiences of
   between five and ten teachers in training who are participating in an English as a second
   language (ESL) teacher education program and are in the process of becoming ESL teachers.
   The research will focus upon their preparation and training as well as their first year of
   teaching ESL in North Carolina public schools. The project will also investigate how the
   first year teachers were able to come to know their students, the families of their students,
   and the community served by their school. The project will investigate the following
   research questions:

   1. How did the teacher education program prepare these students for their first year
      of teaching? What were the most valuable aspects of the teacher education
      program? What was missing from the program?

   2. How did the teacher education program prepare the teachers in training to work
      with Latino students?

   3. How did the teachers in training transition into their first year of teaching? What
      were their biggest concerns? What were their greatest strengths?

   4. What challenges did these first year teachers face? What support did they need
      and did they receive this support?

   5. How did the first year teachers come to know their students, the families of their
      students, and the community served by their school? How did this affect and
      inform their teaching?

   6. How did the first year teachers work with their Latino students and their families?
(b) Procedures

Data Collection

Data for this research project will be collected using a variety of methods:

- The principal investigator will conduct and audiotape interviews with the main participants, their university instructors, and families of their ESL students.
- The principal investigator will observe the participants in their university classes and in their own classrooms once they are teaching.
- Each participant will be given a journal to write about their experiences, observations, and thoughts about their teacher education program and their first year of teaching.
- The principal investigator will conduct and audiotape “focus group” discussions. During these discussions all of the main participants will answer interview questions together in a group format.

Data Collection Schedule

Data collection will begin in the spring 2005 semester and will run through the 2005-2006 school year (August-May). Follow-up data will be collected during the summer after the main participants’ first year of teaching (June-July).

2. Participants

(a) Age, Sex, and Approximate Number

Between five and ten preservice ESL teachers of both sexes will be selected for the research project. They are in their early twenties to middle fifties. Between one and three university professors and course instructors of both sexes will be selected to participate in the research project. They are in their early thirties to middle fifties. Between five and ten Spanish-speaking parents of the first year teachers’ ESL students will be selected to participate in the research project. They will most likely be in their middle twenties to their early fifties.

(b) Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

None.

(c) Method of Recruiting
The main participants were selected because they are enrolled in either an ESL MAT program or are working toward an Add-on ESL teaching license. The university professors and course instructors will be selected based upon their contact with the main participants and their willingness to participate in the research project. The parents of the ESL students taught by the main participants will be selected based upon their willingness to participate in the research project and their contact and relationship with the main participants.

The principal investigator has informally contacted the main participants and the ESL program director at the university and they have all responded positively to the invitation to participate in the research project. Before gathering data for the project, the principal investigator will meet with the main participants, the ESL program director, and various university professors and course instructors to explain what is involved in participating in the research project and then distribute consent forms.

Once the main participants are teaching in NC public schools, the principal investigator will obtain formal permission from the various school systems to conduct research before collecting data in any school. With this permission, the principal investigator will then work with the main participants to select parents of their ESL students who would be willing to participate in the research project. Before gathering data for the research project, the principal investigator will meet with the parents to explain what is involved in participating in the research project and then distribute consent forms in English and the native languages of the parents (Spanish-speaking students and parents will be selected).

(d) Inducement of Participants

Participation in this project will allow these main participants to reflect upon their teacher education program as well as their first year of teaching. They will gain a better understanding of the process of becoming ESL teachers and will have opportunities to talk with the principal investigator and other main participants about their experiences. They will also be given the opportunity to learn from and with the parents of their students. The principal investigator will provide support during the first year of teaching such as finding resources, discussing their teaching, and building relationships with the parents of their students.

The university professors and course instructors will receive valuable feedback about the effectiveness of their teacher education program and will have the opportunity to reflect
upon their role in educating pre-service ESL teachers. The parents of the ESL students taught by the main participants will be given the opportunity to build a relationship with the teachers of their children that will help inform the main participants’ understanding of the families and communities they serve. The principal investigator will serve as an interpreter families participating in the research and facilitate better communication between the families and the school during the research study. All participants will be informed that they can choose to stop participating in the research project at any point during the study and that they can choose not to answer any specific questions. They will also be informed that they can ask to stop recording at any time during the study.

3. Are Participants at risk? No.

4. Describe steps to minimize risk. N/A

5. Are illegal activities involved? No.


7. What are the anticipated benefits to participants and/or society?
   This research project will provide the main participants and teacher educators with the opportunity to reflect upon and improve their practice as students and educators. The main participants will be given the opportunity to reflect upon both their teacher education program and their teaching. They will also be given the opportunity to share their experiences, challenges, and successes with the principal investigator and the other main participants. In learning from and with the parents of their ESL students, the main participants will be better informed about the families and community they serve. This will foster stronger connections between their home and school and this will benefit the ESL students, their families, and the main participants.
   The university professor and course instructors will be given valuable feedback about the effectiveness of their teacher education program and will be able to address any
weaknesses discovered. This will help them build the strongest teacher education program possible and this will benefit future ESL pre-service teachers who enroll in the program.

8. **How will prior consent be obtained?**

The principal investigator will obtain written consent from all participants in the research project before collecting data. See attached Consent Forms (forms will be provided in Spanish for Spanish-speaking parents). Each participant will be given two copies of the consent form (one to sign and return to the principal investigator and one to keep for their records and for contact information). The principal investigator will obtain formal permission to conduct research from school systems before collecting data in any North Carolina Public School (see attached contact letter).

9. **Describe security procedures for privacy and confidentiality.**

All tapes, transcripts, and notes will be kept in a locked drawer in the principal investigator’s desk during the study and will be destroyed at the completion of the study. In reporting the results in the form of a program evaluation, a dissertation and/or scholarly presentations or publications, pseudonyms will be used for all individual participants and the school systems and schools. Special care will be given to protect the identities of the main participants and their grades will in no way be affected positively or negatively by their decision to participate or not to participate in this research project.
To Whom It May Concern:

I am conducting a research study under the direction of Dr. Kerry E. Villalva as part of my doctoral graduate work at UNC-Chapel Hill. One of your new ESL teachers has been participating in my research project during his/her teacher education program and has indicated that she or he would like to continue involvement as a first year teacher in your district. For this reason, I am seeking district approval to conduct research at (BLANK) school. The purpose of my research is to learn about and describe the experiences of ESL teachers during their teacher education training and their first year of teaching. The project will also investigate how the first year ESL teachers come to know their students, the families of their students, and the community served by their school.

In my role as a researcher, I hope to be able to act as a mentor for these new ESL teachers and support them during their first year of teaching. I also hope to be able to help them discover ways to learn more about the families of their Latino students in order to bridge the gap between the home and school. I am requesting permission to be able to spend time in the ESL classroom with the first year ESL teacher to observe and support their teaching. I would also like to work with one or two families selected by the ESL teacher to help the teacher learn more about the community of students in his/her classroom.

I believe my study could provide a great deal of support and learning experiences for both the first year ESL teacher and his/her students and while I do not for see any risk to the teacher, students, families of students, or the school, I will be vigilant in protecting the rights of all participants. I would take great care in protecting the identities of all involved and all participants would be able to withdraw consent (stop participating) at any point during the study.

If you need more information or have any concerns about this study, I would be happy to discuss it with you. Thank you for taking the time to consider this research project. I will follow up this letter with a phone call to answer questions, address your concerns, and discuss next steps.

Sincerely,

Courtney George
Culture, Curriculum, and Change Doctoral Student
UNC-Chapel Hill School of Education
Dear Principal:

I am conducting a research study under the direction of Dr. Kerry E. Villalva as part of my doctoral graduate work at UNC-Chapel Hill. One of your new ESL teachers participated in my research project during her teacher education program and has indicated that she would like to continue involvement as a first year teacher at your school. For this reason, I am seeking your approval to conduct research at your school. Both (BLANK) and (BLANK) have given their consent at the district level.

The purpose of my research is to learn about and describe the experiences of ESL teachers during their teacher education training and their first year of teaching. The project will also investigate how the first year ESL teachers come to know their students, the families of their students, and the community served by their school.

In my role as a researcher, I hope to be able to act as a mentor for these new ESL teachers and support them during their first year of teaching. I also hope to be able to help them discover ways to learn more about the families of their students in order to bridge the gap between the home and school. I am requesting permission to be able to spend a small amount of time in the ESL classroom with your first year ESL teacher to observe and support her teaching. I would also like to work with one or two families selected by the ESL teacher to help her learn more about the community of students in her classroom.

I believe my study could provide a great deal of support and learning experiences for both the first year ESL teacher and her students and while I do not for see any risk to the teacher, students, families of students, or the school, I will be vigilant in protecting the rights of all participants. I would take great care in protecting the identities of all involved and all participants would be able to withdraw consent (stop participating) at any point during the study.

If you need more information or have any concerns about this study, I would be happy to discuss it with you. Thank you for taking the time to consider this research project. I will follow up this letter with a phone call to answer questions, address your concerns, and discuss next steps.

Sincerely,

Courtney George
Culture, Curriculum, and Change Doctoral Student
UNC-Chapel Hill School of Education
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY

Becoming ESL Teachers

Teacher Consent Form

You have been asked to take part in a research study that I am conducting under the direction of Dr. Kerry E. Villalva as part of my doctoral graduate work at UNC-Chapel Hill.

Purpose:
The purpose of this research project is to learn about and describe the experiences of between five and ten teachers in training who are participating in an English as a second language (ESL) teacher education program and are in the process of becoming ESL teachers. The research will focus upon preparation and training as well as the participants’ first year of teaching ESL. The project will also investigate how the first year teachers come to know their students, the families of their students, and the community served by the school.

How Long Your Participation Will Last:
Data collection for this research study will begin during the spring 2005 semester and will last through the 2005-2006 school year (August-May). Follow-up data will be collected during the summer after the first year of teaching (June-July).

What You Are Being Asked to Do:
In order to get the information needed, data will be collected in a variety of ways:

- You will be interviewed by the principal investigator one to three times each semester during the research study. These interviews will be scheduled in advance, will be as convenient as possible for you in terms of dates, times, and locations, and will generally last an hour. Open-ended questions will be asked during these interviews and will focus on your experiences and beliefs about your teacher education program and your first year of teaching. Questions will also focus on how you learn about your students, their families, and the community served by your school.
- You will be observed three to five times each semester during your university courses and your teaching. These observations will be arranged in advance and
you will dictate the dates and times of all observations. The duration of observations will range from between one hour and four hours. The principal investigator plans to look for what you experience in your university courses and what you and your students experience during your teaching.

- You will be given a journal to use to write about your experiences during the teacher education program and your first year of teaching. You can write as frequently or as infrequently as you choose. One entry every week or every two weeks would be sufficient for data collection purposes, but will not be required. The principal investigator might provide prompts once or twice a semester such as: (a) Describe a student in your class; (b) Describe a typical day of teaching; or (c) Explain the most important thing you have learned during your coursework this semester.

- There will be between three to five “focus-group” discussions when all of the teachers in your ESL cohort who have chosen to participate in this research study will answer interview questions together in a group. The open-ended questions will be similar to those asked during individual interviews. There will also be opportunities for participants to ask additional questions, share information (lesson plans, strategies, ideas), and concerns (related to the teacher education program, student teaching, and/or teaching). The principal investigator will facilitate these discussions and all participants must agree to keep all information discussed during the focus groups confidential.

- You will collaborate with the principal investigator in selecting parents of your ESL students to participate in the research study.

Interviews and focus-group discussions will be tape-recorded, detailed notes will be taken, and copies of journal entries will be collected.

**Benefits of Your Participation:**
This research project will provide the opportunity to reflect upon and improve your practice as a student and educator. You will be given the opportunity to reflect upon both your teacher education program and your teaching. You will also be given the opportunity to share your experiences, challenges, and successes with the principal investigator and the other main participants. In learning from and with the parents of your ESL students, you will be better informed about the families and community you serve. This will foster stronger connections between your ESL students’ homes and their school and this will benefit the ESL students, their families, and their teachers.

**Your Rights:**
Participating or not participating will not affect your class standing or grades. You will not be offered nor will you receive any special consideration if you take part in this research study. You are free to withdraw consent (stop participating) in this research study at any time and for any reason. You may also skip any specific questions you choose not to answer for any reason. You may ask at any time that the tape recorder be turned off.
**How Your Privacy Will Be Protected:**
All data and materials collected and recorded during this research study will be kept in a locked drawer in my office during the project and will be destroyed after the project has been completed. In reporting the results in scholarly publications or for evaluation purposes, pseudonyms will be used and special care will be taken to ensure the anonymity of all participants, schools, and school systems.

**Who to Contact for Information:**
If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact Courtney George at (919) 933-2933 or cergeorge@email.unc.edu, or her advisor, Professor Kerry E. Villalva at (919) 843-2045 or villalva@email.unc.edu.

The Behavioral Institutional Review Board (Behavioral IRB) of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has approved this study. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant in this study, please contact the Behavioral IRB at (919) 962-7761 or aa-irb@unc.edu.

Please indicate whether or not you wish to participate in this research study.

___ I DO wish to participate in this research project.
___ I DO NOT wish to participate in this research project.

___________________________  ________________________  _______________
(Name: Please Print)                       (Signature)                                (Date)
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY

_Becoming ESL Teachers_

_Focus Group_

You have been asked to take part in a research study that I am conducting under the direction of Dr. Kerry E. Villalva as part of my doctoral graduate work at UNC-Chapel Hill.

**Purpose:**
The purpose of this research project is to learn about and describe the experiences of between five and ten English as a second language (ESL) first year teachers. The project will also investigate how the first year ESL teachers come to know their students, the families of their students, and the community served by the school.

**Duration:**
Your participation in this focus group will last approximately one hour.

**Procedures:**
There will be between three and five focus-group discussions when all of the teachers in your ESL cohort who have chosen to participate in this research study will answer interview questions together in a group. The open-ended questions will be similar to those asked during individual interviews. There will also be opportunities for participants to ask additional questions, share information (lesson plans, strategies, ideas), and concerns (related to the teacher education program, student teaching, and/or teaching). The principal investigator will facilitate these discussions and all participants must agree to keep all information discussed during the focus groups confidential.

**Risks:**
We do not anticipate any risks or discomfort to you from being in this study. Even though we will emphasize to all participants that comments shared during the focus group discussion should be kept confidential, it is conceivable that participants might repeat comments. Therefore, because we cannot guarantee the control of actions of study participants, and that no one will share your responses, we would caution you to be as honest and open as you feel you can without taking an undue risk.
Confidentiality:
Every Effort will be taken to protect your identity as a participant in this study. You will not be identified in any scholarly publications or reports of this study or its results. Your name will not appear on any transcripts; instead, you will be given a pseudonym. Your real name and matching pseudonym will be kept in a locked drawer in my office. After the focus group has been transcribed, the tape of the focus group will be destroyed.

Benefits:
There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research project. However, you will be given the opportunity to share your experiences, challenges, and successes with the principal investigator and the other main participants.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw:
Your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, or may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. If you choose to participate, keep a copy of this form for your records. You may choose not to answer any specific question for any reason. You have the right to ask for the tape recorder to be turned off.

Who to Contact for Information:
If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact Courtney George at (919) 933-2933 or crgeorge@email.unc.edu, or her advisor, Professor Kerry E. Villalva at (919) 843-2045 or villalva@email.unc.edu.

The Behavioral Institutional Review Board (Behavioral IRB) of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has approved this study. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant in this study, please contact the Behavioral IRB at (919) 962-7761 or aa-irb@unc.edu.

Please indicate whether or not you wish to participate in this research study.

___ I DO wish to participate in this focus group.
___ I DO NOT wish to participate in this focus group.

_____________________  _______________________________  _______________
(Name: Please Print)                                       (Signature)                           (Date)
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY

_Becoming ESL Teachers_

Parent Consent Form
(Provided in Spanish)

**Introduction:**
You have been asked to take part in a research study that I am conducting under the direction of Dr. Kerry E. Villalva as part of my doctoral graduate work at UNC-Chapel Hill.

**Purpose:**
The purpose of this research project is to learn about and describe the experiences of between five and ten English as a second language (ESL) first year teachers. The project will also investigate how the first year ESL teachers come to know their students, the families of their students, and the community served by the school.

Your son or daughter’s ESL teacher is participating in this research project. In order to learn more about this teacher and his or her knowledge of the families of his or her students, I would like to include your family in the research study.

**How Long Your Participation Will Last:**
Data collection for this research study will last through the 2005-2006 school year (August-May). Follow-up data will be collected during the summer after the ESL teachers’ first year of teaching (June-July).

**What You Are Being Asked to Do:**
In order to get the information needed, you and other members of your family will be interviewed by the principal investigator two to five times during the 2005-2006 school year. These interviews will be scheduled in advance, will be as convenient as possible for you in terms of dates, times, and locations, and will generally last one hour. Open-ended questions will be asked during these interviews and will focus on your experiences and beliefs about the education of your son or daughter and your relationship with his or her ESL teacher and the school in general. Questions will also focus on your family’s background, history, and culture. These interviews will be tape-recorded and detailed notes will be taken.
Benefits of Your Participation:
You will be given the opportunity to build a relationship with the teacher of your child that will help inform the teacher’s understanding of the families and community of the school. The principal investigator will serve as an interpreter for your family and facilitate better communication between your family and the school during the research study.

Your Rights:
Participating or not participating will not affect your child’s class standing or grades. Your child will not be offered nor will they receive any special consideration if you take part in this research study. You are free to withdraw consent (stop participating) in this research study at any time and for any reason. You may also skip any specific questions you choose not to answer for any reason. You may ask that the tape recorder be turned off at any time during the study.

How Your Privacy Will Be Protected:
All data and materials collected and recorded during this research study will be kept in a locked drawer in the principal investigator’s office during the project and will be destroyed after the project has been completed. In reporting the results in scholarly publications or for evaluation purposes, pseudonyms will be used and special care will be taken to ensure the anonymity and privacy of all participants, schools, and school systems.

Who to Contact for Information:
If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact Courtney George at (919) 933-2933 or crgeorge@email.unc.edu, or her advisor, Professor Kerry E. Villalva at (919) 843-2045 or villalva@email.unc.edu.

The Behavioral Institutional Review Board (Behavioral IRB) of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has approved this study. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant in this study, please contact the Behavioral IRB at (919) 962-7761 or aa-irb@unc.edu.

Please indicate whether or not you wish to participate in this research study.

___ I DO wish to participate in this research project.
___ I DO NOT wish to participate in this research project.

_________________________________  ______________________________  _________
(Name: Please Print)                                (Signature)                                 (Date)
APPENDIX B: RESEARCH LOG

August 2005
8/9—group meeting

September 2005
9/16—meeting/informal interview w/ Sarah
9/18—meeting/informal interview w/ Rebecca
9/21—classroom/informal interview Sarah
9/29—classroom/informal interview Sarah
9/30—group meeting (Rebecca absent)

October 2005
10/5—classroom/informal interview Lynda
10/6—classroom/informal interview Sarah and Kelly
10/10—classroom/informal interview Sarah
10/9—meeting/informal interview w/ Rebecca
10/17—meeting/informal interview Kelly
10/21—classroom/informal interview Lynda
10/24—group meeting (Kelly had to leave early)
10/27—classroom/informal interview w/ Rebecca
10/27—classroom/informal interview w/ Sarah
10/31—classroom/informal interview Sarah

November 2005
11/1—ESL panel discussion (Sarah, Lynda, Rebecca) talked to ESL methods class
11/2—classroom/informal interview Lynda
11/2—classroom/informal interview Kelly
11/10—classroom/informal interview Sarah
11/17—classroom/informal interview Kelly
11/18—classroom/informal interview Rebecca
11/30—classroom/informal interview Lynda
11/30—classroom/informal interview Sarah

December 2005
12/1—group meeting (all present)
12/5—formal interview (oral history and teaching context/beliefs) Rebecca
12/14—formal interview (oral history) Sarah
12/15—classroom Rebecca, Kelly (cancelled due to ice and delayed opening)
12/15—formal interview (oral history and teaching context/beliefs) Kelly
12/17—open house/party Sarah’s home (Gary, Lynda also present)
12/21—formal interview (oral history and teaching context/beliefs) Lynda (at her home)

January 2006
1/11—meeting formal interview (teaching context/beliefs) Sarah
1/26—group meeting (Sarah and Kelly present)
1/27—phone call/informal interview Sarah
1/30—classroom support/informal interview Sarah
1/31—classroom support/informal interview Sarah

February 2006
2/6—emails from all 4 teachers indicate high stress week, bump group meeting up to talk
2/8—group meeting (Kelly absent) local bar
2/20—meeting Sarah
2/23—classroom Sarah
2/21—daylong observation Kelly
2/27—daylong observation Sarah

March 2006
3/2—daylong Lynda
3/3—local bar (student teachers and Rebecca)
3/6—classroom Sarah
3/9—group meeting (all but Rebecca)
3/23—classroom Sarah
3/23—classroom Kelly
2/24—meeting with parents (parents of Kelly’s students)

April 2006
4/10—Immigration Rally/march
4/11—classroom Sarah
4/13—classroom Kelly
4/19—classroom Lynda
4/19—meeting Sarah
4/20—daylong Rebecca

May 2006
5/13—classroom Sarah
5/24—group meeting (all present)

June 2006
6/6—classroom Sarah
6/7—classroom Sarah
6/14—group meeting (all present)

October 2006
Follow-up group meeting (all present)

May 2007
Follow-up group meeting planned, but couldn’t pin down a date

July 2007
Follow-up meeting with Rebecca
September 2007
Follow-up meeting with Sarah
APPENDIX C: NEW TEACHER SUPPORT GROUP MEETING PROTOCOL

- Schedule visits
- Schedule next group meeting

- Time for each to share and discuss a challenge/problem/concern/etc.
- Time for each to share an idea/success/resource/plan/etc.
- If time allows, ask about culturally responsive teaching, participation in research project
APPENDIX D: WRITTEN REFLECTION FORM

Name: ____________________________________________  Date: ________________

What are you most proud of as an ESL teacher right now? What are you doing really well? What part of your job do you like the best?

What is your biggest challenge as an ESL teacher right now? What is particularly frustrating or difficult?

Have you had any culturally responsive moments or taught any culturally responsive lessons recently? Please describe.

How much do you know so far about your students’ funds of knowledge? How have you gathered this knowledge? Has anything about your students surprised you recently?
APPENDIX E: TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

Excerpts included in the dissertation were not for the purpose of fine-grained linguistic analysis, but rather to illustrate the participants’ understandings of their teaching selves and contexts in their own words and voices. For this reason, transcription conventions were kept simple.

. falling intonation
? rising intonation
, continuing intonation
-- self interruption
(text) supporting information
[[unint]] unintelligible
[....] pause
text speaker emphasis
APPENDIX F: FORMAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Oral history… background story

2. Decision to teach ESL…
   - Personal beliefs about ESL
   - Is ESL different from other teaching jobs, how so?
   - Did you know this when you started or has this surprised you?

3. Current teaching context… tell me about your teaching context
   - ESL program/approach? Did you have any say in this matter?
   - Support/mentor
   - Kinds of kids—what are your students like?
   - Kinds of teachers—relationships with other teachers
   - School culture/climate (who feels safe, welcome, included)
   - How are the Latino students doing… why?
   - Parent contact?

4. Feelings about participating in this project…
   - Do you think participation in this project has had any kind of impact on your classroom practice or beliefs?
APPENDIX G: TEACHER EDUCATION SCHEDULE OF COURSEWORK

Prerequisites
Grammar of Current English (modern English grammar)
Introduction to Language (basic linguistics)
Explorations in Literacy (literacy for English language learners)

Summer Session II
Introduction to Teaching (history of teaching and the teacher with emphasis on multicultural education)
Introduction to Schools (social foundations course with a focus on race, class, and gender)

Fall
Human Development (educational psychology for K-12 music, foreign language and ESL)
Contexts of Education I (social foundations course with emphasis on race, class, gender)
Practica Student Internship
Methods and Materials for Teaching ESL K-12 (methods course with emphasis on teaching academic English through meaningful academic content and culturally responsive teaching)
Language Minority Students: Issues for Practitioners (develops knowledge, skills, attitudes, and awareness that are necessary for teachers to facilitate social and academic success of ESL students in American schools)

Spring
Learner and Learning II (educational psychology)
Practica Student Internship
Methods and Materials for Teaching ESL K-12 (methods course focused on reflecting on teaching experience through current research)
Teaching Secondary Students with Disabilities
Summer I

Advanced Pedagogy
Curriculum Leadership
REFERENCES:


*Educational Researcher* (22) 1, p. 18.


